



BS

1151

.P922

4

THE

✓
Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c. &c.

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS.

LONDON:

RICHARD D. DICKINSON, FARRINGDON STREET.

1880.

A
HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE BOOK OF
NUMBERS.

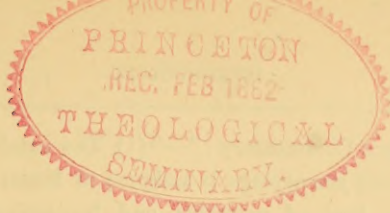
WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDICES, Etc. Etc.

BY

REV. WILLIAM JONES.

LONDON:
RICHARD D. DICKINSON, FARRINGDON STREET.
1880.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SMYTH & YERWORTH, HOLBORN BUILDINGS,
HOLBORN, E.C.



HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS,

BY

WILLIAM JONES.

Introduction.

TITLE.

THE word *Numbers* is a translation of the title given to this book in the LXX, Ἀριθμοί, in the Vulgate *Numeri*, and was evidently applied to it because it contains the record of the two numberings of the people. The Jews sometimes call it נִדְבָר, *Vayedabber*, which is its first word in the Heb.; but more frequently בְּמִדְבָּר, *Bemidbar*, in the desert, which is its fifth word, and more accurately characterises the book.

CONTENTS.

“The book narrates the history of the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness from the completion of the law-giving at Sinai (Lev. xxvii. 24) to their mustering in the plains of Moab for actual entry into the Land of Promise”—or, from “the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt” (chap. i. 1) to the end of the tenth month of the fortieth year (Deut. i. 3), or a period of thirty-eight years and nine months. The events of the history are generally given in their chronological order, except in chapters xv.-xix., inclusive. These “chapters appear to deal with a long period, from which only isolated episodes are given; and of these the dates can only be conjectured.”

AUTHORSHIP.

From the earliest times the book has been generally regarded as, in substance, at least, the work of Moses. In support of this view, the following reasons are

given in the "Speaker's Commentary :"—“(1) The catalogue of the stations or encampments during the journeyings is assigned to Moses in xxxiii. 2. (2) The intermixture in this book of narrative and legislative matter is one of its characteristic features This feature is exactly one which belongs to the work of a contemporary annalist. (3) That the author had an intimate acquaintance with Egypt may be strikingly illustrated from Numbers. Compare viii. 7 *sqq.*; v. 11-35; xix. 1-10; xi. 5, 6; xiii. 22. (4) The statements of this book abound in evidences that the writer and those with whom he lived were still in the desert. Compare xix. 14; ii.; ix. 16 *sqq.*; x. 1-28, 35, 36. (5) There are topographical statements in the book which could hardly have been written after the days of Moses. Compare xxi. 13 with xxxii. (6) The various communications purporting to be from God to Moses are so worded and often of such a nature (cf. *e.g.* xiv. 11-26), that unless we go the length of denying their historical character altogether, we must admit them to have been recorded by the very person who received them. (7) No other person than Moses has been or can be named with anything like probability, or even plausibility, as the author We conclude then, with confidence, that nothing has been as yet alleged which disturbs the generally-accepted views respecting the authorship of this book. It is, in substance, the work of Moses; and whilst many portions of it were probably committed to writing for years before the whole was completed, yet the concluding chapters were not written until towards the close of the fortieth year after the exodus.”

As to our work on this book, very few words are necessary. In accordance with a leading principle of this series of Commentaries, we have endeavoured to present the largest number of things in the smallest number of words. To this principle, literary finish and grace have been subordinated. Some of the records contained in this book are not well adapted to homiletic treatment or fruitful in homiletic suggestion. In dealing with these, we have endeavoured to suggest homiletic methods without any straining of the text or unworthy handling of the Sacred Word; and we venture to hope that we have not been altogether unsuccessful in this respect. The illustrations which are given are (by Mr. Dickinson's request) numerous. They are drawn from a wide range of literature, and very few of them are taken from "Storehouses," "Treasures," or "Dictionaries of Illustration." Each one will be found to be well suited to illumine or impress the point to which it is attached. In our work we have consulted the best authors who have written on this book; and are under considerable obligations to "A Commentarie upon the Fourth Booke of Moses, called Numbers, by William Attersoll, Minister of the Word" (1618); "Comfortable Notes upon the Booke of Numbers, by Bishop Gervase Babington" (1637); "Keil and Delitzsch's Commentary on the Pentateuch;" and to the "Speaker's Commentary."



HOMILETIC COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE.

(Verses 1-3.)

"The object of the encampment at Sinai," says Perowne, "has been accomplished. The Covenant has been made, the Law given, the Sanctuary set up, the Priests consecrated, the service of God appointed, and Jehovah dwells in the midst of His chosen people. It is now time to depart in order that the object may be achieved for which Israel has been sanctified. That object is the occupation of the Promised Land. But this is not to be accomplished by peaceable means, but by the forcible expulsion of its present inhabitants; for 'the iniquity of the Amorites is full,' they are ripe for judgment, and this judgment Israel is to execute. Therefore Israel must be organised as Jehovah's army; and to this end a mustering of all who are capable of bearing arms is necessary. Hence the book opens with the numbering of the people."

Thrice were the people numbered in the wilderness. Nine months previous they were numbered for the purpose of collecting atonement-money from every male of twenty years old and upward (Comp. Exod. xxx. 11-16 with xxxviii. 25, 26). On this occasion they were numbered with a view to war. And thirty-eight years afterwards, in the plains of Moab, they were again numbered, for the division of the Promised

Land among the tribes, according to the number of their families (Comp. xxvi. and xxxiii. 54).

Our text sets forth:—

I. The Authority for this Numbering.

It was commanded by God. "The Lord spake unto Moses . . . Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel." Contrast this with the numbering of the people by David (1 Sam. xxiv., and 1 Chron. xxi). This was expressly commanded by the Lord: that was utterly devoid of Divine authority. This was done for wise and worthy reasons (as we shall see); that, from pride and vain reliance. Moses numbered the people to see the number of God's subjects able to fight in the Lord's battles. David seems to have desired to know the number of the people as his own subjects, and to display the extent of his own dominion and power. As the result of David's sin, the Lord, by pestilence, slew seventy thousand men. It is of the utmost importance that the leaders of men should be well assured of two things in the movements which they inaugurate:—

1. *That they have the Divine approval of their undertakings.* The movement which is approved by God, and well prosecuted, shall advance to splendid triumph. But that which He approves

not must end in failure and disaster. Apply this test to our undertakings.

2. *That they are actuated by worthy motives in their undertakings.* A sinful, selfish, or mean motive will vitiate our enterprises and mar our works. "The Lord looketh at the heart." Let us scrutinize our motives.

II. The Place of this Numbering. "In the wilderness of Sinai."

1. *In a desert.* The wilderness suggests (1) the ideas of a life of *Privation*. Little or no food grows in the desert. There are no homes in the desert. Pleasant streams and refreshing shades are seldom found there. (2) *Peril*. This would arise from the scorching heat of the sun; from the furious violence of the storm, and from the fierce attacks of savage beasts. (3) *Perplexity*. The desert has no well-defined roads made through it. The traveller is very liable to lose his track, grow bewildered, and sink into utter perplexity. We have in this an illustration of the life of the good in this world. The world cannot supply the soul's needs. We have needs and yearnings that the best things of this world are utterly inadequate to satisfy. We cannot find a home for the soul in anything here. This is not our rest. There are perils many and great in this present life and world. We, too, are "in the desert."

2. *In a desert where the tabernacle of God was.* "In the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were in the desert; but the Lord also was there. His presence was a guarantee of (1) *Provision*. He fed them with bread from heaven. His presence and power transformed the desert into a banquet hall. In obedience to His will the solid rock became a fountain, and the desert rejoiced in pleasant streams. In Him the homeless wanderers found a home and rest. (2) *Protection*. He guarded them from the scorching heat of the sun by day by the pillar of cloud, and from the attacks of savage beasts by night by the pillar of fire. In the day of battle He was their shield and fortress. (3) *Direction*. He "led His people like a

flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." He "guided them in the wilderness like a flock." "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." It matters not that this world is like a desert to the godly soul, if God be with us here. His presence will afford the most adequate and delightful supplies, the divinest satisfaction, the most impregnable defence, and the most infallible guidance.

"Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious, lonely wilds I stray,
Thy presence shall my pains beguile;
The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden green and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around."
Addison.

III. The Time of this Numbering.

"On the first of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt." That is, exactly one month after the setting up of the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 2, 17) and about eleven months from the time of their arrival in the desert of Sinai. The people abode in this desert nearly a whole year (Comp. Exod. xix. 1, with Num. i. 1, and x. 11). What was the reason of this protracted halt? With so great and inspiring a destiny before them as the taking possession of the Promised Land, why did they not advance at once with eager resolution to their task? The design of this long stay was, that they might be instructed in their relations to God and to each other; that they might learn lessons of duty and worship; that they might be taught to reverence and obey God. The pause was for the purpose of promoting progress. There are times and circumstances in which standing still is the truest and speediest advance. It is well that the declaration of war should not be made until plans of operation are formed, equipments prepared, soldiers drilled and disciplined, etc. What a terrible reminder of this truth France received in her recent war with Prussia! It was well that the Apostles, with the commission to the most glorious task, and the world sorely needing their message, should, notwithstanding, tarry at Jerusalem in

silence, until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Let us learn the wisdom of waiting until circumstances, events, and agents are ripe for action ; and while we wait, make diligent preparation, etc. (a)

IV. The Manner of this Numbering.

"Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls, from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel." They were to take account of—

1. *Only the males.* All females were excluded from the reckoning.

2. *Only the males above twenty years old.* Those who were under that age were not taken into the account, being regarded as too young to endure the strain of military service.

3. *Only the males above twenty years old who were in vigorous health,*—"able to go forth to war." The sick, the aged, the infirm, the maimed were exempted from this census, as unfit for war.

4. They were to be numbered "*after their families,*" that it might be known of what tribe, and of what particular house every able man was.

5. The numbering was to be *individual, and by name.* "With the number of their names, every male by their polls." The census was particular and minute. From these directions as to the numbering we learn:—

First: *That the Lord chooses fit instruments for the accomplishment of His purposes.* He here selects for war not women, or boys, or old men, or the infirm ; but able men. He can use any instrumentality, even the feeblest, for the most arduous tasks. But such is not His method. He employs means adapted to the ends to be attained. Illustrations of this abound. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Paul.

Second: *That the Lord is perfectly acquainted with every one who is fitted for His work.* He knows the tribe, the family, the name of every one who is "able to go forth to war" against

ignorance, sin and misery. Ponder this ye able men who are at ease in Zion.

V. The Design of this Numbering.

1. The primary design was, *the organization of the army.* God had promised to give them the land of Canaan. He will certainly bestow it upon them ; but not without their effort. Innumerable foes must be vanquished before they enter upon the land. They must do battle with the heathen nations that are now in possession, and conquer them. And to do this, they must organise an army, employing the fittest men for soldiers, making the wisest arrangements for marching, encamping, etc. Where ordinary means are adequate to accomplish the desired end, God never uses extraordinary. What man can do for himself, God never does for him. God has promised to us the victory over our spiritual foes, the possession of the inheritance of spiritual perfection and privileges, and heaven as the goal of our earthly pilgrimage. He will not fail to fulfil His promise. But we, too, must use the means. If we would enter into the restful activities of heaven, we must live the life of faith and of Divine service on earth. If we would gain the victory we must be valiant and persistent in the fight. If we would win the prize we must "run with patience the race," etc. (b). But this numbering would serve other important purposes. It would tend—

2. *To manifest the Divine faithfulness.* God had promised Abraham that his seed should be as the stars for multitude. This census shows how God was fulfilling that promise. Seventy-five souls went down into Egypt. And how wonderfully are they increased in 215 years ! Now there are six hundred thousand men able to bear arms. And the whole population could not have been less than two millions, and this despite the oppression and persecutions of the Egyptians. "He is faithful that promised." *

* For a critical examination of the numbers recorded in this book see Keil and Delitzsch *in loco*.

3. *To show forth the Divine power.* We see this in His feeding and sustaining so immense a number in the desert, "without harvest or husbandry, without planting or tilling, without sowing of corn, or without feeding and breeding of cattle."

4. *To the promotion of order.* "It is a rout and a rabble, not an army, that is not mustered and put in order."

5. *To exhibit, on the coming of the Messiah, the correspondence of the event with the predictions concerning it.* He was predicted as to come of the seed of

Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David. Hence the importance of an accurate register of tribes and families.

6. *To illustrate the care of God for His people generally and particularly.* They were numbered individually and by name. The Lord's care over His people is most minute and constant and tender. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "The Lord knoweth them that are His." "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I warn those who have only lately found their Saviour from rushing before their fellow-men, and attempting to fill those posts in the service of Christ which demand a deeper experience and a more tried and tested Christianhood. The Lord's retirement to the wilderness after He had been baptised and announced as the Messiah, after He was in a peculiar manner "full of the Holy Ghost," gives to all of us not less humbling than profitable guidance as to the deliberation with which solemn work ought to be undertaken. . . . Not up to Jerusalem, but away to the wilderness; not out to the multitude, but back to the solitude; not forth to the world to conquer, but away from it, "impelled" by the Spirit, "to be tempted." Nor does this stand solitary in the history of the Church. You remember that strange, half-involuntary forty years of Moses in the wilderness of Midian, when he had fled from Egypt. You remember, too, the almost equally strange years of retirement in Arabia by Paul when, if ever, humanly speaking, instant action was needed. And pre-eminently you remember the amazing charge of the ascending Lord to the disciples: "Tarry at Jerusalem." Speaking after the manner of men, one could not have wondered if out-spoken Peter, or fervid James, had said: "Tarry, Lord! How long? Tarry, Lord! Is there not a perishing world groaning for the 'good

news'? Tarry! did we hear Thee aright, Lord? Was not the word, haste?" Nay: "Being assembled together with them, He *commanded* them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but *wait* for the promise of the Father."—Grosart.

(b) We are here in every sense on a stage of probation; so that, having been once recovered from apostasy, we are candidates for a prize and wrestlers for a crown. It is not the mere admission into the kingdom for which we contend. When justified, there is open before us the widest field for a righteous ambition—and portions heightening in majesty, and deepening in brilliancy, rise on our vision to incite to unwearied endeavour. For I count it one of the glories of Christianity that, in place of repressing, it gives full scope to all the ardours of the spirit of man. . . . Christianity tells her subjects that the rewards in eternity, though all purchased by Christ, and none merited by men, shall be rigidly apportioned to their works. She tells them that there are places of dignity, and stations of eminence, and crowns with more jewellery, and sceptres with more sway, in that glorious empire which Christ shall set up at His second appearing. And she bids them strive for a loftier recompense; she would not have them content with a lesser portion, though it infinitely outgrew human imagination as well as human desert. She sends them

to wrestle for the loftiest, though unworthy of the lowest. She does not allow the believer to imagine that everything is done when a title to the kingdom is obtained. She shows him that the trials of the last great assize shall proceed most accurately by measure of works. There is no swerving in the Bible from this representation. And if one man become a ruler over ten cities, and another over five, and another over two, each receiving in exact proportion to his improvement of talents, then it is clear as demonstration can make it that our strivings will have a

vast influence on our recompense—that there shall be no particle in the portion of the righteous which is not altogether an undeserved gift; still, in the arrangements of judgment there will be an accurate balancing of what is bestowed and what is performed. Oh! it shall not be said that because he is secure of admission to heaven, the Christian has nothing further to excite him to toil. He is to wrestle for a place amongst spirits of chief renown; he is to propose to himself a station close to the throne.
—H. Melville, B.D.

IN THE DESERT: AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE LIFE OF THE GOOD IN THIS WORLD.

(Verse 1.)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation."

In the Hebrew Bible this book is called *בְּנִדְבָר* = in the desert. By this name also the Jews generally speak of it. The title is most appropriate for the book which records the history of Israel during the long wandering in the wilderness.

Consider :

I. The natural trials of the desert.

Deserts are generally characterised by—

1. *Barrenness*. "The general character of the wādys, as well as of the mountains of Sinai," says Dean Stanley, "is entire desolation. If the mountains are naked Alps, the valleys are dry rivers. . . . The Israelites were brought into contact with a desolation to them the more remarkable by its contrast with the green valley of the Nile." And in another place he speaks of "the whole wilderness" as having "a doubly dry and thirsty aspect." The world, with its wealth and pleasures, its honours and power, cannot afford satisfaction to the longing souls of men. It is clear from their very nature that temporal and material things cannot satisfy spiritual beings. (a)

2. *Homelessness*. Men do not as a rule establish homes in the desert. They may pitch their tent there for a little while, but they speedily move on

to other scenes. The home of the soul is not here. Its rest is not here. If any man attempt to find the home of his soul in anything here he will find, sooner or later, that great has been his mistake, and sore will be his disappointment. Only in the *spiritual*, the *personal*, the *perfect*, and the *permanent* is the true home of the soul.

3. *Pathlessness*. There were no well-defined roads in the desert. And the Israelites were strangers in it. Left to themselves they were liable and likely to go astray. And man if left to himself now, or to the world's guidance, will not find the true path of life. And even when by Divine direction he has found it, the world presents many enticements to lure him from it.

4. *Perilousness*. They were exposed to danger from the scorching sun, from violent storms, from savage beasts, and from desperate bands of robbers. The perils to which the good are exposed in this world are many and great. They spring from "the wiles of the devil," "the depths of Satan," the seductions of the world, and the lusts of the flesh.

And in the case of Israel in the desert there seemed to be,—

5. *Aimlessness*. How aimless and fruitless must the thirty-eight years of wandering, to which they were con-

condemned for their unbelief and rebellion, have seemed to them! Inexpressibly weary and dreary must those years have been to the young generation. There are times in the spiritual life of good men when they pass through somewhat analogous experiences. The years pass, opportunities come and go, life hastens on towards its close; and so little seems accomplished, so little progress made in our character, so little true work done. We have toiled and struggled long, and at times painfully, and yet we have not attained, the goal of our ambition seems still so far off that the heart is prone to grow weary and despondent. Such are some of the trials of the desert.

II. The Divine Presence in the desert.

"The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were in the desert; but God was with them there. We have here,—

1. *Divine communication in the desert.* "The Lord spake unto Moses," etc. And God is in constant communication with His people now. His voice is never silent; for in silence some of His most precious communications are made. The thoughtful and reverent spirit hears His voice in the sounds and silences of nature, and can say,

"Cleon hears no anthem ringing in the sea and sky:

Nature sings to me for ever—earnest listener, I." (*b*)

God is also ever speaking through the Sacred Scriptures, and by His Holy Spirit.

2. *Divine provision in the desert.* The Lord fed the vast host of Israel with manna from heaven, and with water from the rock He supplied them. They were in the desert, but the resources of God never failed them. So now, "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

3. *Divine shelter and rest in the desert.*

The people of Israel for forty years were homeless wanderers; but they found their rest and home in God. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." God is the only true home and rest of souls.

3. *Divine direction in the desert.* The Lord went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. Thus the desert was not really pathless, their tedious wanderings were not really aimless. And still the Lord directs His people. He does so,—(1) By the leadings of His providence. (2) By the teachings of the sacred Scriptures. (3) By the influences of the Holy Spirit.

5. *Divine protection in the desert.* The Lord protected the Israelites from the heat of the sun by day by means of the pillar of cloud; and from the attacks of savage beasts by night by means of the pillar of fire. He also guarded them from the assaults of neighbouring nations, except in those instances in which they disregarded His counsel, and rebelled against Him. God is still the sure defence of all who put their trust in Him. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" God is with us in our march through the desert; and His presence assures us of all good.

III. The Divine uses of the desert.

Why this wandering to and fro for thirty-eight years? What is the meaning of this tedious and painful delay? Of what use was it? To prepare a people for the inheritance of Canaan. God has not only to give them the inheritance, but to fit them for it—for its privileges, duties, etc. Time was needed for two things:—

1. *That the generation of slaves might pass away.* Were the people that left Egypt fit to enter upon the privileges and duties connected with the independent possession of the Promised Land? Slavery had robbed them of their manhood. They were most persistent and provoking unbelievers, contemptible cowards, shrinking from any difficulty,

quailing in the presence of any danger. They were the creatures of carnal appetites, preferring the fish, the cucumbers, the onions, and the melons of Egypt with slavery, rather than the manna of heaven and freedom. Emancipated in body, they are yet slaves in soul. And by reason of this, and of their murmurings and rebellions against God, they must live and die in the desert (see xiv. 26-35). In this we have an illustration of God's dealings with His people now. There is much in us that must die and be buried before we can enter upon the inheritance of spiritual perfection. Our craven-hearted fears, our carnal lusts, our miserable unbelief, must be buried in the desert. The slave nature must be put to death, etc. There are godly persons in this world who are past service, whose strength and health have long departed, whose life is one of constant weariness and pain, who long for the summons hence, and wonder why it is so long delayed. May it not be because the discipline of the desert is not yet ended? There is something

of the old nature that is not yet dead and buried.

2. *That a generation of free men might be educated.* In the desert God was training the children into true manhood,—into fitness for the place, the duties, and the privileges designed for them. And the education was remarkably successful. The generation that was trained in the wilderness and entered the Promised Land, was honourably distinguished for faithfulness, etc. (comp. Josh. xxiv. 31; Jer. ii. 2, 3). So in this world God is educating us into calm, far-seeing faith, into high-souled courage, into reverent and hearty obedience, etc. This life, when truly lived, is not fruitless, aimless, or vain. Even its trials are designed to bless us. Its storms and strifes are intended to invigorate and nerve us. In the desert we are being trained by God into spiritual perfection and power, and educated for service and blessedness.

Conclusion :

Let us ponder well the Divine design of our life in this world. By the help of God let us seek its realization in ourselves.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We might ask the statesman, and as we wished him a happy new year, Lord Dundas would answer, "It had need to be happier than the last, for I never knew one happy day in it." We might ask the successful lawyer, and the wariest, luckiest, most self-complacent of them all would answer, as Lord Eldon was privately recording when the whole bar envied the Chancellor, "A few weeks will send me to dear Encomb, as a short resting-place between vexation and the grave." You might say to the golden millionaire, "You must be a happy man, Mr. Rothschild." "Happy! me happy! What! happy! when just as you are going to dine you have a letter placed in your hand, saying, 'If you do not send me £500, I will blow your brains out!' Happy! when you have to sleep with pistols at your pillow!" We might ask the clever artist (David Scott), and our gifted countryman would

answer, of whose latter days a brother writes, "In the studio all the pictures seemed to stand up like enemies to receive me." This joy in labour, this desire for fame, what have they done for him? The walls of this gaunt sounding place, the frames, even some of the canvases, are furred with damp. In the little library where he painted last was the word "*Nepenthe*," written interrogatively with white chalk on the wall. We might ask the world-famed warrior, and get for an answer the "*Miserere*" of the Emperor Monk, or the sigh of a broken heart from St. Helena. We might ask the brilliant courtier, and Lord Chesterfield would tell us, "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and I do not regret their loss. I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illu-

minate the whole decorations to the astonishment of an ignorant audience." We might ask the dazzling wit, and faint with a glut of glory, yet disgusted with the creatures who adored him, Voltaire would condense the essence of his existence into one word "*Ennui*." And we might ask the world's poet, and we should be answered with an imprecation by that splendid genius, who—

"Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame; drank early, deeply drank;
drank draughts
That common millions might have
quenched, then died
Of thirst, because there was no more to
drink."—*Pollak*.

—DR. JAMES HAMILTON.

(b) God hath a voice that ever is heard,
In the peal of the thunder, the chirp
of the bird;
It comes in the torrent, all rapid and strong,
In the streamlet's soft gush as it
ripples along;

It breathes in the zephyr, just kissing
the bloom;
It lives in the rush of the sweeping
simoom;
Let the hurricane whistle or warblers
rejoice,
What do they tell thee, but God hath
a voice?
God hath a presence, and that ye may
see
In the fold of the flower, the leaf of
the tree;
In the sun of the noon-day, the star of
the night;
In the storm-cloud of darkness, the
rainbow of light;
In the waves of the ocean, the fur-
rows of land;
In the mountains of granite, the atoms
of sand;
Turn where ye may, from the sky to
the sod,
Where can ye gaze that ye see not a
God?

Eliza Cook.

THE NUMBERED PEOPLE.

(Verses 2, 3.)

These annals are an historic mirror. They image out a heavenly Father's special dealings with each child of faith. The parallel is quickly drawn. They once groaned bitterly in cruel bondage. But Mercy set them free. Believer, you too were once a slave at Satan's will. But now the chain is broken, etc. Israel's tribes are journeying, as strangers, through a desert waste. And is not yours a wilderness career? But they are conveyed by a heavenly guide. So, too, a beckoning hand marks out your wanderings by day—by night, etc. They had heard "the voice of words"—the fiery law. This law has also pierced the deep recesses of your inner man. You have thus learned the glorious righteousness of God, etc. Was Israel God's special portion? You, too, are not your own. You are a purchased property, etc. There is no novel thought in this. But common truths—like common blessings—soon

lose their point. Colours soon fade without a renewing touch.

And now, before the people move, God speaks again. He gives command to register the number of each tribe. . . . New instruction meets us here.

In common matters, men count possessions, which are choice, and dear, and prized. They whose mean joys are fixed on this world's pelf—thus calculate their gold. See, too, the watchful shepherd's care. Do we, then, stray beyond sound limits when in God's numbering we read God's love? Do not clear characters here write, that His people are thus numbered, because loved—counted, because prized? My God loves me: my name is in his heart. The knowledge of this fact is reached by happy steps. They are all Scripturally firm. Review them. Wherefore was Jesus sent to bear your sins, and deck you in his robe of right-

teousness? Why was Christ slain? Why are you spared? . . . Wherefore did the Spirit speed to arouse your sleeping conscience—to show self's ruin and the remedy of the Cross? . . . How is it that your tottering feet are still upheld along the slippery hill, which leads to Zion's heights? The strength is not your own. There can be only one reply, God loves you. Would that the eye of Faith for ever rested on this glorious truth. God loves you! What an amazing impulse to bear the willing servant over all mountains of doubt, and fear, and hindrance! What a strong shield to ward off Satan's darts! It is victory, before one blow is struck! It is light in the dark day of trial! It is the holy wing to lift above the world!

Who are numbered? None are enrolled, but they whose age and strength enable them for war. Christ's service is a mighty work—a determined fight. Satan disputes each onward step. The world presents its countless troops, etc. The flesh is an internal foe, etc. Believer, yours is this warrior's life. Fight, as one fighting for eternity. Strive, as one striving for a kingdom. Jesus commands, etc. Follow him boldly. No one will triumph who has never fought. No one who truly fights, will fail.

Each numbered soldier paid a ransom price (Ex. xxx. 12). The rich—the poor—were equally assessed. All

in Christ's camp are ransomed by his blood. All plead one sacrifice.

Next comes the register. It presents a vast array of numbered warriors. Beyond six hundred thousand men (Num. i. 46). Whence is this marvellous increase? One family had entered Egypt. Hardship, and cruelty, and toil had done their worst to keep them low. But God's early promise was their portion (Gen. xii. 2). The numbered people prove that our God is Truth as well as Love.

Behold, again, this multitude. It is an emblem of a far larger host (Rev. vii. 9). The fight is a prelude to the crown.

About a year has passed since the last numbering. The Levites then formed part of the collected mass. They are not now included. But the number then and now amounts exactly to the same. Israel has surrendered Levi's tribe, but Israel's forces are not thereby less. Here is a profitable lesson. We never lose by giving to the Lord. Selfishness is penury. Christian benevolence is wealth.

Once more survey the Numbered People. You are inclined to say, this band will safely reach the promised land. Alas! two only steadfastly adhere. The multitude distrusts the Lord. Their corpses strew the desert. An awful proof that outward privileges alone save not (Heb. iii. 19). Unbelief is the bar which shuts out Christ. Unbelief rejects the Gospel, and so perishes.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

RANK AND SERVICE.

(Verses 4-16.)

In these verses we have an illustration of—

I. Co-operation in Divine Service.

One man of every tribe, being head of the house of his fathers, was to be associated with Moses and Aaron in numbering the people. By this arrangement—

1. *The toil of Moses and Aaron would be lessened.* There is urgent need for the lessening of the labours of many overwrought Christian ministers to-day.

And there are many things in which others may render them valuable assistance.

2. *The accomplishment of the task would be facilitated.* The cause of God in this world will advance with rapid strides when co-operation in Christian work shall become constant and universal amongst His people.

3. *The envy of the princes would be prevented.* We know that on a subsequent occasion certain "princes of the

assembly" arose against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" "Sore eyes," say Babington, "cannot abide the clearness of the sun, and an evil stomach turneth the best nutriment to hurt. The greener the leaf is, the sooner the worms bite it." Probably, moved by envy, they would have murmured against Moses and Aaron at this time; but, being united with them in the business, all occasion thereof is removed. Co-operation in service is the best antidote to envy and complaint and carping criticism. Grumblers are seldom found among the workers of the Church.

We have in the text an illustration of—

II. Society's need of leaders.

1. *Because they are at present indispensable to social order and progress.*

These men were representatives of the people. Instead of "the renowned," we should translate, "the called of the congregation."—Keil and Del.: "In verse 16 they are designated as 'called men of the congregation,' because they were called to diets of the congregation, as representatives of the tribes, to regulate the affairs of the nation." And society in this age must have its leaders and representatives in politics, in military affairs and enterprises, in science, in religion, etc. Moreover, it is essential that some persons should be entrusted with the reins of government. Rulers are indispensable to order. Leaders are necessary also to secure unity in the pursuit of any great and comprehensive aim. Certain objects of utmost importance to society cannot possibly be attained without cohesion of purpose and effort on the part of a large number of men, and such cohesion is impossible without leaders. "Amongst the masses," says Guizot, "even in revolutions, aristocracy must ever exist; destroy it in nobility, and it becomes centred in the rich and powerful Houses of the Commons. Pull them down, and it still

survives in the master and foreman of the workshop."

2. *Because of the differences in the faculties of men.* These men were "princes" from the nobility of their birth: and they were probably men distinguished also for their abilities. Speaker's Comm.: "The selection of the Princes of the Tribes appears from v. 4 to have been made under Divine direction; but probably, as v. 16 seems to suggest, they were for the most part the same persons as those chosen a few months previously at the counsel of Jethro (Exod. xviii. 21-26.) Of those here named Naashon, prince of Judah, was brother-in-law of Aaron (Exod. vi. 23), and ancestor of King David. Elishama, prince of Ephraim, was grandfather of Joshua (1 Chron. vii. 26, 27). The peers of men like these, though nothing has been in fact preserved to us respecting them, were no doubt entitled, amongst their fellows, to the epithet 'renowned,' v. 16." Some men are born rulers. The governing faculty is innate in them. They have the extensive mental vision, the calmness of judgment, the promptitude in action, the love of order, the power of arrangement, the acquaintance with human nature, the skill in managing affairs, etc., which mark them off for leaders of men. But in others the qualifications of leadership are conspicuous by reason of their absence. And amongst those in whom the ruling faculty is innate it exists in different degrees of power. So they are fitted for different degrees of dominion. "We must have kings," says Emerson, "we must have nobles; nature is always providing such in every society; only let us have the real instead of the titular. In every society, some are born to rule, and some to advise. The chief is the chief all the world over, only not his cap and plume. It is only this dislike of the pretender which makes men sometimes unjust to the true and finished man." (a)

We have in the text an illustration of—

III. The grand characteristic of true leaders.

They are pre-eminent in service. These "princes of the tribes" were to serve the tribes in this numbering of the people. "Those that are honourable should study to be serviceable." "Whosoever will be great among you," said our Lord, "let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "I am among you as He that serveth." The great God who is supreme over all is servant of all. And from the ministering of the archangel to the labour of the insect, the true rank and glory of a creature consist in the service which it renders in God's universe. (*b*)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) Greatness is not a teachable nor gainable thing, but *the expression of the mind of a God-made great man*; teach or preach, or labour as you will, everlasting difference is set between one man's capacity and another's, and this God-given supremacy is the priceless thing, always just as rare in the world at one time as another. What you can manufacture or communicate, you can lower the price of, but this mental supremacy is incommunicable: you will never multiply its quantity, nor lower its price; and nearly the best thing that men can generally do, is to set themselves not to the attainment, but the discovery of this: learning to know gold when we see it from iron-glance, and diamonds from flint-sand, being for most of us a more profitable employment than trying to make diamonds out of our own charcoal.—*John Ruskin*.

(*b*) There is no dignity but of service. How different the whole notion of training is now from what it was in the middle ages. Service was honourable then. The first thing taught then was how to serve. No man could rise to the honour of knighthood without service. A nobleman's son even had to wait on his father, or to go into the family of another nobleman, and wait upon him as a page, standing behind his chair at dinner. This was an

honour. No notion of degradation was in it; it was a necessary step to higher honour. And what was the next higher honour? To be free from service? No. To serve in the harder service of the field; to be a squire to some noble knight, to tend his horse, to clean his armour, to see that every rivet was sound, every buckle true, every strap strong, to ride behind him and carry his spear, and if more than one attacked him to rush to his aid. This service was the more honourable because it was harder, and was the next step to higher honour yet. And what was this higher honour? That of knighthood. Wherein did this knighthood consist? The very word means simply *service*. And for what was the knight thus waited on by his squire? That he might be free to do as he pleased? No, but that he might be free to be the servant of all. By being a squire first, the servant of one, he learned to rise to the higher rank, that of servant of all. His horse was tended, his armour observed, his sword and spear and shield held to his hand, that he might have no trouble looking after himself, but might be free, strong, unwearied, to shoot like an arrow to the rescue of any and every one who needed his ready aid. There was a grand heart of Christianity in that old chivalry.—*George Macdonald*.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PEOPLE.

(Verse 5.)

"These are the names of the men that shall stand with you."

The text teaches that the Lord knew these "princes of the tribes of their fathers"—their names, their parentage, their fitness for the work in which they were to take part, etc. We infer that God is perfectly acquainted with His people.

Consider :

I. The great truth here implied.

God knows His people individually and altogether.

1. *This is philosophical.* If God is infinite, He must know all things. Nothing can be so great as to surpass His comprehension; nothing so small as to escape His notice. Great and small, generally and particularly, He knows all things and everything. "The relation God holds to objects of knowledge," says Bushnell, "is different in all respects, from that which is held by us. Our general terms, *man, tree, insect, flower*, are the names of particular or single specimens, extended, on the ground of a perceived similarity, to kinds or species. They come, in this manner, to stand for millions of particular men, trees, insects, flowers, that we do not and never can know. But God does not generalise in this manner, getting up general terms under which to handle particulars, which, as particulars, He does not know. His knowledge of wholes is a real and complete knowledge. It is a knowledge of wholes as being a distinct knowledge of particulars. He knows the wholes in the particulars, the particulars in the wholes." "History acquaints us, that Cyrus had so vast a memory, that he knew the name of every particular soldier in his army, which consisted of divers nations; shall it be too hard for an infinite understanding to know every one of that host that march under His banners?" (a)

2. *This is Scriptural.* See 1 Kings xix. 14-18; Psalms i. 6; lvi. 8; cxlvii. 3, 4; Isa. xl. 26-31; Mal. iii. 16, 17;

Matt. vi. 25-34; x. 29, 30; John x. 3, 14, 27; Phil. iv. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Rev. iii. 5; xxi. 27. "No doubt but He that calls the stars of heaven by their names, knows the number of those living stars that sparkle in the firmament of His Church. He cannot be ignorant of their persons, when He numbers the hairs of their heads, and hath registered their names in the book of life. . . . He knows them as a general to employ them, as a shepherd to preserve them." God's knowledge of His people involves His favour towards them. It is a knowledge not of apprehension merely, but of approbation also. It implies affection for them, the exercise of care over them, etc., as in Amos iii. 2.

II. The practical bearings of this great truth.

The realization of this truth will tend,—

1. *To restrain from sin.* The consideration of God's perfect acquaintance with us is fitted to check any rising inclination to evil. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all His goings."

2. *To promote sincerity of life.* He cannot be imposed upon by any empty forms or hollow pretences. Our thoughts and feelings are known to Him. And simulation and dissimulation are an abomination in His sight.

3. *To promote humility.* The consideration of God's knowledge makes manifest the greatness of our ignorance. "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." God knows all our secret sins,—all unholy desire; etc. Surely this should humble us.

4. *To quicken reverence towards God.* Great intelligence is a thing to command respect and admiration. But He in whom infinite intelligence is joined with infinite holiness should be admired and adored.

5. *To comfort the godly under re-*

proaches. So it proved to Job when misunderstood and falsely accused by his friends (Job xvi. 19; xxiii. 10).

6. *To sustain the godly in affliction and trial.* He who thoroughly knows each and every one of His people will certainly support them in their afflictions, give them patience in their trials, and in His own time deliver them from all troubles.

7. *To incite to hearty obedience.* If He knows us always and altogether, shall we not endeavour to do those things which He approves? If He re-

gards us with favour, shall we not seek to love and honour Him?

8. *To strengthen trust in God.* No plans that are formed against His people are unknown to Him. His own designs are formed in infinite wisdom. He knows all our temptation and weakness, all our danger and need. And His power to help is as great as His intelligence. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hands."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A little child sits on the verandah and watches the worm. He is a voyager for his food on the leaf of the mulberry tree, and he goes eating, eating, eating. Let us suppose that some Divine Power enables that worm to be so far intelligent as to say, "It is said that there are beings who can understand this whole tree; but it does not seem to me possible. I can comprehend how there might be beings that should understand this leaf, and the next three or four; but to take in all the million leaves on this tree is a thing that transcends my conception. I do not believe it possible for any magnified worm to understand so much." It is not possible for any worm. But there is a little Sunday-school child sitting on the verandah, who looks on the tree and sees the whole of it; and not only sees the whole of it, but can individualize the leaves at its pleasure. How easy it is for that little child to take in that whole tree! and how hard it is for that worm to take in more than three leaves! And let that child grow up, and be educated, and trained in landscape-gardening, and it will take in, not merely a tree, but a whole forest. If one leaf is coloured, if one twig is broken, if there is a dry branch, it does not escape his notice. Differences of hue, light, and shadow, the infinite diversities that come in forest life—he takes them all in, and has a kind of omnipresence in his consciousness of the facts of this whole matter. What could a worm

understand or imagine of a being that is competent to take in the realm of philosophy, and that makes himself the measure of creation? He says, "It does not seem reasonable to me that anybody can understand more than twenty leaves. I cannot; and I do not see how anybody else can." And yet, do not you understand how a person can take in sections, and gradations, and ranks, and degrees infinitely above what a worm could understand? And have you anything more to do than to carry on that idea to imagine a Being before whom all eternity passes, and to whom all the infinite treasures of this eternity shall be just as simple as to you the leaves on the individual tree are? It only requires magnitude of being, infinity.—*H. W. Beecher.*

The sun is a natural image of God; if the sun had an eye, it would see; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth, in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel His creature, the sun, in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding? certainly more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust. We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in

particular; and so exactly, as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the same cast of it: shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all know-

ledge, be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold everything in the world, which is infinitely less to Him than a wide room to a picture?—*Charnocke*.

THE CENSUS AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verses 17-19.)

This census was taken as they were formed into a nation. In Egypt they were not a nation, but hordes of slaves. Now begins their national existence. God reduces them to order, consolidates them, that they might undertake the responsibilities and enjoy the privileges of nationhood.

Why did God give us this record? Paul writes that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," etc. The Bible is a practical book; it is inspired for our *profit*—all of it. True, some portions are more esteemed by us than others are. Look at the well-used Bible of an aged Christian. Some parts are more soiled than others. Is this right? Yes. It is compatible with reverence for the whole Bible, just as Christ, while loving all the disciples, had his *three* best-loved among them. But we ought not to neglect any part of the Bible. There is a blessing in all of it. In places we least expect it, we find it to be inspired for our profit. This chapter seems dry and profitless, but it is not so. Like some of the glens in South Wales,—sterile, barren, unattractive, and, to the outward look, valueless; but underneath are coal mines and untold wealth. So with this chapter. Let us inquire, what this numbering was calculated to teach the people at the time, and in like manner to teach us at the present day?

I. It was calculated to teach them the grand fact that God was personally interested in and well acquainted with each one of them individually.

The object of the census was to individualize them, to separate each from the mass, to register each name that the record might be kept before God. He

wanted them all to feel, that He knew them and was interested in them. There is a tendency in man to think that he is lost in the mass, and that the great God is not interested in *him*. This tendency is very pernicious; it leads to sin, and then to despair. The Bible all through combats it; and there is no doubt that it was one great design of this census. This chapter is to us like the microscope in nature—revealing to us God's greatness by the interest He takes in the individual. It is a grand truth to feel, God sees *me*, knows all about *me*, cares for *me*. He is not some cold abstraction, indifferent, inaccessible, and unmindful of us. Far from it. The Bible and Christ bring Him near to us, showing Him to be full of interest in us. He feeds the fowls, clothes the lilies, knows the varying market-price of sparrows, numbers the hairs of our heads, knew the street, house, and person where Peter lodged. Struggling, anxious, suffering one, single yourself from the crowd. God knows, loves, cares for thee.

II. It was a vivid illustration of the faithfulness of God to His word.

He had said to Abraham that his seed should be numerous, that they should go to Egypt, etc. The figures of this chapter show how well He kept His word. To faith a fact is better than a hundred arguments. And anything that strengthens our faith in God's Word is a great blessing to us. The worth of the Bible and its promises in a suffering, sinful world no one can tell. To shake one's faith in the promises is like going through a hospital and rudely tearing the pillows from under the heads of the sufferers. It is faithfulness that makes the promises precious.

What a comfort to Israel to have confidence in the Word of God, to feel that they could trust Him! Nothing would impress His faithfulness more than this census, showing how well He Had kept His promise to Abraham. It also speaks to us, etc.

III. It afforded them striking proof of God's power to keep His word.

God is not only true, but His arm is almighty. It was by this census that the people knew how many they were. God led them out of Egypt, rescued them at the Red Sea, protected and fed them thus far in the wilderness. Was there anything too hard for the Lord? Would not all this encourage them to lean on His arm? He had proved His power to keep His word. God is equal to all our wants. His word is true; His arm is strong. With such a God

for our Friend we have nothing to fear, etc. "Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord." "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home:
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

Hart.

These figures then are eloquent. Let them lead us to trust more fully in God. The ungodly! what say they to you? They certify your doom, if ye repent not. The threatenings as well as the promises of the Bible rest on the word of the faithful and almighty God.—
David Lloyd.

THE FIRST ARMY OF ISRAEL, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHURCH MILITANT.

(Verses 20-46.)

In these verses we have the record of the number of men "from twenty years old and upwards that were able to go forth to war" in the respective tribes, and in the whole of the tribes united, with the exception of that of Levi. A consideration of the numbers of the respective tribes will be found in other commentaries. We propose to consider this first army of Israel as an illustration of the Church Militant.

Consider :

I. The necessity of this army.

Before the Children of Israel can take possession of the Promised Land the idolatrous Canaanitish nations must be dispossessed. To expel them from the country Israel must encounter them in battle and vanquish them. And to do this a large and brave army was necessary. It is necessary that the Christian Church should be militant. The individual Christian cannot attain the inheritance or spiritual perfection without conflict. And the Church cannot take its true place or fulfil its Divinely appointed mission without doing vigorous battle.

1. *Internal foes have to be conquered.*

In ourselves there are carnal appetites which must be subdued, evil passions which must be quelled by the power and principles of Divine grace, etc. The Christian has to achieve self-conquest. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." "The battle in which thoughts are the only swords, and purposes are the only spears, and tears are the only shots—the inward struggles of men's souls—these are, after all, the mightiest battles; and in the sight of God they are the most sublime."

2. *External foes have to be conquered.* God summons us to do battle with ignorance and superstition, with dirt and disease, with immorality and irreligion, with vice and crime. We need to guard against Satanic subtlety, and to resist Satanic influence. It is madness to make light of the adversaries with which the Church of Jesus Christ has to contend. It is to invite defeat, etc.

II. The authority for organising this army.

"The Lord spake unto Moses," ex-

pressly commanding him to take the number of men able to do military duty. The first army of Israel was organised under Divine direction. May we not infer from this that there are possible circumstances in which war is justifiable? In itself war is unquestionably a terrible evil. (a). But it certainly appears to us that circumstances may arise in which a nation would be justified in having recourse to war. "The arms are fair," says Shakspeare, "when the intent of bearing them is just."

"War is honourable

In those who do their native rights maintain;
In those whose swords an iron barrier are
Between the lawless spoiler and the weak;
But is, in those who draw the offensive blade
For added power or gain, sordid and despicable

As meanest office of the worldly churl."

Joanna Baillie. (b.)

III. The Composition of this Army.

1. *It was composed of Israelites only.* None of the "mixed multitude" were included. The warriors were men who could "declare their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers." In fighting the battles of the Lord in this age thorough decision is required. "Who is on the Lord's side?" The victorious Church must be composed of true Christians. Victories for truth and right demand the prowess of true and righteous men.

2. *It was composed of able men only.* "Every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war." In accomplishing His purposes God uses fit instruments. He employs means adapted to the attainment of His ends. In the conflicts of the spiritual life and work every Christian may through Jesus Christ be an able warrior. Weak and timid in ourselves, we may be courageous and "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

3. *It comprised all the able men.* "Every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war." No excuses were allowed.

None were exempted. Altogether the army was very large: it consisted of six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men. Every Christian is called to be a soldier. The continuance and growth of the Christian life are impossible apart from vigorous conflict. We must either vanquish our spiritual enemies, or they will vanquish us. Neutrality is out of the question here. And no thought of truce can be entertained without loss and injury. Neither can we do our fighting by proxy. Every Christian must be a personal combatant in the great conflict.

IV. The conquering spirit of this Army.

Their leaders constantly endeavoured to inspire the soldiers with the spirit of intelligent trust in God. When this spirit animated them they achieved splendid triumphs: when it failed them they turned their backs to their enemies and fled in dismay. Victory in our spiritual conflicts is attainable only through faith. When our faith in God is strong, we are invincible. When it fails, we are overthrown by the first assault of the enemy. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." True faith gives glorious visions to the spirit, inspires us with heroic courage, girds us with all-sufficient strength, makes us more than conquerors through the Captain of our salvation. (c.)

Conclusion:—1. *A call to decision.* "Who is on the Lord's side?" 2. *A call to courage.* Our arms are tried and true; our great Leader is invincible; let us then "be strong and of a good courage." 3. *A call to confidence.* Our courage, to be true, must spring from faith. By trust we triumph.

"Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power;
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror."

C. Wesley.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Wherever there is war, there *must* be injustice on one side or the other, or on both. There have been wars which were little more than trials of strength between friendly nations, and in which the injustice was not to each other, but to the God who gave them life. But in a malignant war of these present ages there is injustice of ignobler kind, at once to God and man, which *must* be stemmed for both their sakes. It may, indeed, be so involved with national prejudices, or ignorances, that neither of the contending nations can conceive it as attaching to their cause; nay, the constitution of their governments, and the clumsy crookedness of their political dealings with each other, may be such as to prevent either of them from knowing the actual cause for which they have gone to war.

John Ruskin.

(b) You may, perhaps, be surprised at my implying that war itself can be right, or necessary, or noble at all. Nor do I speak of all war as necessary, nor of all war as noble. Both peace and war are noble or ignoble according to their kind and occasion. No man has a profounder sense of the horror and guilt of ignoble war than I have. I have personally seen its effects upon nations, of unmitigated evil on soul and body, with perhaps as much pity and as much bitterness of indignation as any of those whom you will hear continually declaiming in the cause of peace. But peace may be sought in two ways. One way is as Gideon sought it, when he built his altar in Ophrah, naming it, 'God send peace,' yet sought this peace that he loved as he was ordered to seek it and the peace was sent in God's way:—"The country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." And the other way of seeking peace is as Menahem sought it, when he gave the King of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, "that his hand might be with him." That is, you may either win your peace or buy it:—win it, by resistance to evil; buy it, by compromise with evil. You

may buy your peace with silenced consciences; you may buy it with broken vows, buy it with lying words, buy it with base connivances, buy it with the blood of the slain, and the cry of the captive, and the silence of lost souls—over hemispheres of the earth, while you sit smiling at your serene hearths, lisping comfortable prayers evening and morning, and counting your pretty Protestant beads (which are flat, and of gold, instead of round, and of ebony, as the monks' ones were), and so mutter continually to yourselves, "Peace! peace!" when there is no peace, but only captivity and death for you, as well as for those you leave unsaved—and yours darker than theirs.—*Ibid.*

I believe in war. I believe there are times when it must be taken. I believe in it as a medicine. Medicine is not good to eat, but when you are sick it is good to take. War is not a part of the Gospel; but while men and the world are travelling on a plain where they are not capable of comprehending the Gospel, a rude form of justice is indispensable, though it is very low down. If you go to a plain still higher, war seems to be a very poor instrumentality. And if you go yet higher and higher till you reach that sphere where the crowned Sufferer stands, how hateful and hideous war seems! In the earlier periods of society it is recognised as having a certain value; but its value is the very lowest, and at every step upward, till you come to this central Divine exhibition, it loses in value. Always it is a rude and uncertain police of nations. It is never good. It is simply better than something worse. Physical force is the alternative of moral influence; if you have not one, you must have the other.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Few religious men could justify most of the wars of history. On one side or other war must be the greatest of all crimes, and the instances in which either side is right are but few. But this does not affect the principle. If but one can be instanced in which a

people simply resisted aggression, conquest, violation of liberties, or wrong, it would suffice. If England were invaded by an unprovoked aggressor; if London were assailed, its homes in imminent peril of violation, the property of its merchants, the honour of its women, the lives of its children and citizens imperilled, what should I do? Go out and reason with the invader? appeal to his sense of righteousness? Yes, it would be right to do that if it were practicable. Crowd into churches to pray? Yes, it would be eminently right to do that. But suppose the invader to be as ambitious, as false, and as conscienceless as Napoleon, to be sunk below any possible appeal to moral feeling, am I passively to let him work his devilry—to burn my house, murder my children, and do worse to my wife and daughters? Am I to pray, and passively expect God to work a moral miracle? I think not. I am to employ righteous means to resist wrong, and to ask God to bless them. If only the magistrate's sword will deter the robber and the murderer, I am to use that sword; and an army in its only lawful capacity is simply a power of magistracy. Some of the greatest deliverances that God wrought for His people were through armies. The most precious liberties of the world and the Church have been won by armed revolution and defence. From Marathon to the Armada, from the destruction of Sennacherib to that of Napoleon, from the revolt from under Pharaoh to that from under the Stuarts, or the King of Naples, the moral and religious sense of the world has approved the resistance of wrong by force. So long as force and the magistrate and the police are necessary to preserve righteousness and justice and liberty, they must be employed. The ideal of Christianity is peace and universal brotherhood, but it is not to be attained by permitting the ruffian and the robber and the tyrant to work their will unresisted—that would be to leave society to lawlessness and brutality.—*H. Allon, D.D.*

(c) *II* often, through the world's

literature and history, have we heard some ambitious commander or emperor babbling, in his vain waking dreams, of a world's conquest! We turn from these poor visions of cruelty and blood to the meek army of the living God; from the false victories of force to the true victories of faith. Here, on a lowly bed, in an English village by the sea,—as I was lately reading,—fades out the earthly life of one of God's humblest, but noblest servants. Worn with the patient care of deserted prisoners and malefactors in the town jail for twenty-four years of unthanked service, earning her bread with her hands, and putting songs of worship on the lips of these penitent criminals—she is dying; and as the night falls some friend asks, "What shall I read?" The answer of the short breath is one firm syllable, "Praise!" To the question, "Are there no clouds?" "None; He never hides His face. It is our sins which form the clouds between us and Him. He is all love, all light." And when the hour of her departure was fully come, "Thank God, thank God!" And there,—as I read again—in his princely residence, surrounded with the insignia of power, but in equal weakness before God, expired a guileless statesman, nobleman by rank and character, calmly resigning back all his power into the Giver's hands, spending his last days of pain, like many hours of all his days before it, with the Bible and Prayer-book in his feeble hand, saying, at the end, "I have been the happiest of men, yet I feel that death will be gain to me, through Christ who died for me." Blessed be God for the manifold features of triumphant faith!—that He suffers His children to walk towards Him through ways so various in their outward look;—Sarah Martin from her cottage bed, Earl Spencer from his gorgeous couch, little children in their innocence, unpretending women in the quiet ministrations of faithful love, strong and useful and honoured men, whom suffering households and institutions and churches mourn. All bending their faces towards the Everlasting Light, in one faith, one cheering

hope, called by one Lord, who has overcome the world, and dieth no more!

"One army of the living God,
To His command we bow:
Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

The sun sets; the autumn fades; life

hastens with us all. But we stand yet in our Master's vineyard. All the day of our appointed time, let us labour righteously, and pray and wait, till our change come, that we may change only from virtue to virtue, from faith to faith, and thus from glory to glory.—
F. D. Huntington, D.D.

THE LEVITES AND THEIR SERVICE AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 47-54.)

The tribe of Levi was not numbered with the other tribes. The Levites were exempted from military service, and set apart for the service of the tabernacle. In any wise and proper arrangement of the affairs of human society, provision will be made for the requirements of the spiritual nature of man. The chief features of the service of the Levites as here indicated may properly be regarded as illustrative of the work of the Christian ministry.

I. The true Christian minister should manifest some fitness for the work before he is designated thereto.

The Levites had manifested their zeal for the worship of God by slaying the worshippers of the golden calf at the command of Moses (Exod. xxxii. 26-29). And, as a reward, the honour of this sacred calling is conferred upon them. They had already acted as assistants to the priests (Exod. xxxviii. 21), being of the same tribe as Moses and Aaron. And now they are expressly appointed to the charge of the tabernacle. "But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the Lord spake" (not "had spoken") "unto Moses, saying," etc. "Singular services shall be recompensed with singular honours." That a person should manifest some fitness for the work of the Christian ministry before he is set apart to it seems so obvious and indisputable that it would be superfluous to call attention to it, were it not that in practice it is so often disregarded. There seems to be in some quarters an impression that almost anyone is competent for the

sacred office of the ministry. In determining the trade which their sons shall learn, wise parents will consider their respective inclinations and aptitudes. An artist would, perhaps, make a poor minister; a successful merchant might utterly fail as a barrister. Is there less aptitude required in the work of the Gospel ministry than in the other pursuits of life? Unfitness should be tolerated in any sphere of life and activity rather than in this. There should be adaptation of *voice*, of *mind*, of *character*, etc.

II. That the true Christian minister is called of God to his work.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, . . . Thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony," etc. In addition to fitness for the office, the true minister will feel a conviction of moral obligation to enter upon the holy work: the impulsions of the Divine Spirit will urge him in the same direction, until the words of St. Paul truly express his condition, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." "True ministers," says Hugh Miller, "cannot be manufactured out of ordinary men—men ordinary in talent and character—in a given number of years, and then passed by the imposition of hands into the sacred office; ministers, when real, are all special creations of the grace of God." The Christian ministry is not a profession into which a man may or may not enter as he pleases; but a Divine vocation, which is solemnly binding upon those to whom it is addressed, and without which no

man can enter upon it without sin.—(a)

III. That the work of the Christian minister demands his entire devotion thereto.

The Levites were to be free from all other service, that they might give themselves unreservedly to the ministry of the tabernacle. There are men who are rendering (in preaching and otherwise) most useful and self-denying service to the Church of Christ, whose time and energy are not entirely devoted to it. They are worthy of high honour. But the work of the stated minister and pastor demands all his time and energy, if it is to be done well. His duties are so many, so great, and so unspeakably important, as to challenge all his powers. M. Henry:—"Those that minister about holy things should neither entangle themselves, nor be entangled, in secular affairs. The ministry is itself work enough for a whole man, and all little enough to be employed in it." The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Christians at Rome, specifies their respective duties, and urges each one to diligence in the discharge of his own (Rom. xii. 6, 8). And to Timothy he writes: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life," etc. (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). And considering the solemn issues of his work, in conscious weakness he cries, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

"Tis not a cause of small import

The pastor's care demands;

But what might fill an angel's heart,

And fill'd a Saviour's hands."

Doddridge.

IV. That a faithful discharge of the duties of the Christian minister is essential to the well-being of society.

The duties of the Levites are briefly stated in verses 50, 51, and 53. No one who was not of their tribe was in any way to intermeddle with their duties or encroach upon their position. If a stranger drew near to the tabernacle he was to be put to death. If the functions of the Levites were not properly discharged, wrath would be upon Israel. What was the intention of these strict regulations?

We suggest—

1. *That the sacred things might be decently kept and ordered.* The Levites had charge "over all the vessels of the tabernacle, and over all things that pertained to it." It is most important that everything which is used in connection with the worship and service of God should be appropriate to its sacred uses, and be well preserved. God's service hallows even the meanest things which are employed in it; but we should devote our best things to it.

2. *That the people might be inspired with reverence for sacred things.* This to us, to a large extent, accounts for the stern penalty annexed to any intrusion upon the function of the Levites. Reverence is one of the highest attributes of mind. The Lord seeks to enkindle or increase it in Israel.

3. *That the people might be impressed with the unworthiness of sinful man to approach unto the Most High.* We sinners are utterly unfit to draw near unto Him who is "glorious in holiness." The Levites were called to the charge of the sacred things. They alone could draw near to the tabernacle. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ all men may now draw near to God. (See Heb. x. 19-22.)

Now, these things are needful at the present time. Becoming worship, reverence for sacred things, and humility towards God are ever obligatory and beneficial to us. The true Christian minister in the faithful discharge of his duties confers the greatest benefit upon society.—(b)

V. That personal holiness of heart and life are essential to the faithful discharge of the duties of the Christian Ministry.

The Levites were separated from the other tribes for their sacred work. Their outward separation was intended to show forth the separation from worldliness and sin which the Lord required of them. They who have to do with holy things should themselves be holy. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." (See Rom. ii. 21-24; 1 Tim. iv. 16; Tit. ii. 7.) Thus

Goldsmith describes the Christian minister—

"In his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."
(c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The minister without a vocation is not only unhappy, he is guilty,—he occupies a place, he exercises a right which does not belong to him. He is, as Jesus Christ said, "a thief and a robber," who has not entered in through the gate, but climbed up some other way. The word *vocation* has, in other applications (that is to say, as applied to professions of a secular order), only a figurative significance,—at least only a figurative significance is attributed to it. It is equivalent to *aptitude, talent, taste*. It is natural to represent these qualifications as voices, as appeals. But when applied to the ministry, the word returns to its proper sense. When conscience authorises and compels us to the discharge of a certain duty, we have that which, although out of the sphere of miracle, deserves most fully the name of vocation. In order to exercise the ministry legitimately, a man must be called to it.—*A Vinet.*

(b) That a man stand and speak of spiritual things to men. It is beautiful,—even in its great obscurity and decadence, it is among the beautifullest, most touching objects one sees on the earth. This Speaking Man has indeed, in these times, wandered terribly from the point; has, alas! as it were, totally lost sight of the point; yet, at bottom, whom have we to compare with him? Of all public functionaries boarded and lodged on the Industry of Modern Europe, is there one worthier of the board he has? A man even professing, and never so languidly making still some endeavour, to save the souls of men: contrast him with a man professing to do little but shoot the partridges of men! I wish he could find the point again, this Speaking One, and stick to it with tenacity, with deadly energy; for there is need of him yet! The Speaking Function—this of Truth coming to us with a living voice, nay, in a living shape, and as a concrete practical exemplar: this, with all our Writings and Printing Functions, has a perennial place. Could he but find the point again,—take the old spectacles off his nose, and looking up discover, almost in contact with him, what the *real* Satan, and soul-devouring, world-devouring Devil, Now is.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

(c) Beloved in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is a very monstrous thing that any man should have more tongues than hands;

for God hath given us two hands and but one tongue, that we might do much and say but little. Yet many say so much and do so little, as though they had two tongues and but one hand: nay, three tongues and never a hand. Inasmuch as that may be aptly applied to them which *Pandolphus* said to some in his time: "You say much, but you do little; you say well, but you do ill. Again, you do little, but you say much; you do ill, but you say well." Such as these (which do either worse than they teach, or else less than they teach; teaching others to do well and to do much, but doing no whit themselves) may be resembled to diverse things. To a whetstone, which being blunt itself, makes a knife sharp; to a painter, which being deformed himself, makes a picture fair; to a sign, which being weather-beaten, and hanging without itself, directs passengers into the inn; to a bell, which being deaf and hearing not itself, calls the people into the church to hear; to a nightingale, which being restless and sitting upon a thorn herself, brings others by her singing into a sweet sleep; to a goldsmith, which being beggarly and having not one piece of plate to use himself, hath store for others which he shows and sells in his shop. Lastly, to a ridiculous actor in the city of Smyrna, which pronouncing "*O cælum!*"—(O heaven!)—pointed with his finger toward the ground; which when *Polemo*, the chiefest man in the place, saw, he could abide to stay no longer, but went from the company in a chafe, saying, "This fool hath made a solecism with his hand; he hath spoken false Latin with his hand." Such are all they which teach one thing and do another; which teach well and do ill.—*Thomas Playfere.*

The faithful minister is strict in ordering his conversation. As for those who cleanse blurs with blotted fingers they make it the worse. It was said of one who preached very well, and lived very ill, that when he was out of the pulpit it was a pity he should ever go into it; and when he was in the pulpit, it was a pity he should ever come out of it. But our minister *lives* sermons. And yet I deny not but dissolute men, like unskilful horsemen who open a gate on the wrong side, may, by the virtue of their office, open heaven for others, and shut themselves out.—*Thomas Fuller.*

EVERY MAN BY HIS OWN STANDARD.

(Verse 52.)

The various tribes of Israel had to be placed in order, and the whole to be put under a strict regulation. This was needful for encampment, for march, for worship, for battle: without this, confusion, etc. Israel in many things typical of the Christian Church. We see it in this also,—

I. The One Israel.

Observe:

1. *Their real oneness of descent.* The children of Abraham.

2. *Their original condition.* All bondsmen.

3. *Their Divine deliverance.* Brought out of Egypt, etc.

4. *In one Divine covenant.* Promises, etc.

5. *Journeying to the one inheritance.*

6. *Under one command.* See how this all applies to the Church of the Saviour. All the children of God by faith, all heirs, all pilgrims, all of one covenant, one Saviour, etc.—essentially one; one in Christ Jesus.

II. The various Tribes.

Observe:

1. *Their different names.* Necessary for distinction—recognition.

2. *Their different positions in the camp.* See next chapter. East side, v. 3; south side, v. 10; west, v. 18; north, v. 25.

3. *The various tribes were in one general accord and union.* All one religious confederacy, absolutely one, worship one, etc.; in perils one, in warfare one, in prospects one.

III. The Special Directions to the different Tribes.

1. *Each tribe had their own standard or banner to distinguish it from the rest.* No order without.

2. *Each man was to be by his own standard.* Not a wanderer; not a visitor to all; but his own fixed, legitimate position.

3. *Thus the duties of every tribe would be regarded and fulfilled.*

4. *Thus the interests of all would be sustained.* Now, if this was important and necessary in the camp of Israel, how much more in the Church of the Lord Jesus! The thousands there: millions here. But let us see,—

IV. The Spiritual Lessons the subject presents to us.

1. *We see now the denominational tribes in the Kingdom of Christ.* Christians of different conditions, education, training, leaders, etc.

2. *Christians have a special interest in their own camp.*

3. *To devote themselves to these is the first duty and privilege.* Just as families are constituted, so churches.

4. *All the various denominational camps constitute the one Church of the Saviour.* Only one Israel, one body, one army, etc. For particular purposes, every man by his own camp; for general purposes, all acting in conjunction and harmony. How absurd jealousies and envyings! How ridiculous isolation! How oppressive assumptions and priestly dictations! How suicidal strifes and contentions! How monstrous exclusions and anathemas! The great tabernacle of God is built four-square, and includes all the tribes. Christian denominations have special standards, and serve the whole best by every man being by his own standard. The glory of God is identified with the unity of the whole. Christ's prayer to Him, etc.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

CHAPTER II.

THE MARSHALLING OF THE PEOPLE.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

In this chapter we have the order of the twelve tribes in the camp and on the march. And in these verses we have the general directions which the Lord gave unto Moses for marshalling the tribes. Keil and Del.: "The twelve tribes were to encamp each one by his standard, by the signs of their fathers' houses, opposite to the tabernacle (at some distance) round about, and, according to the more precise directions given afterwards, in such order that on every side of the tabernacle three tribes were encamped side by side and united under one banner, so that the twelve tribes formed four large camps or divisions of an army. Between these camps and the court surrounding the tabernacle, the three leading *mishpachoth* (i.e., families or clans) of the Levites were to be encamped on three sides, and Moses and Aaron with the sons of Aaron (i.e., the priests) upon the fourth, i.e., the front or eastern side, before the entrance (chap. iii. 21-38). דָגֵל, a standard, banner, or flag, denotes primarily the larger *field sign*, possessed by every division composed of three tribes, which was also the banner of the tribe at the head of each division; and secondarily, in a derivative signification, it denotes the *army* united under one standard, like *σημεία*, or *vexillum*. It is used thus, for example, in verses 17, 31, 34, and in combination with מִדְבָּרָה in verses 3, 10, 18, and 25, where 'standard of the camp of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan' signifies the hosts of the tribes arranged under these banners. אִתָּת, the *signs* (ensigns) were the smaller flags or banners which were carried at the heads of the different tribes and subdivisions of the tribes (the fathers' houses). Neither the Mosaic law, nor the Old Testament generally, gives us any intimation as to the form or character of the standard

(*degel*). According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man, or of a man's head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards."

In these verses we have four homiletic points.

I. Order.

The Lord here gives directions to Moses concerning the order that was to be observed amongst them. The great importance of a clear and well understood arrangement amongst so large a number of men will be obvious upon the slightest consideration. But notice:—

1. *God Himself delights in order.* This is clearly manifest in His works,—in the rising and setting of the sun and moon, in the sublime march of the stars, in the ebbing and flowing of the tides, in the regular succession of the seasons. Even comets, those apparently erratic wanderers in space, are not erratic; but move with perfect precision both as regards space and time.

2. *The importance of order is recognised in human affairs.* In the Christian Church, in national government, in military affairs, in the family and home, and in the individual life, order is of the utmost importance, and is fraught with the greatest advantages. "Order," says Southey, "is the sanity of the mind, the health of the body, the peace of the city, the security of the state. As the beams to a house, as the bones to the microcosm of man, so is order to all things." "Let all things," says St. Paul, "be done decently, and in order."

3. *This order was probably Divinely instituted as a means to peace and unity.*

It is probable that if God had not determined the order which should be observed among them, there would have been strife and contention for priority and precedence. Thus the tribe of Reuben might have claimed the pre-eminence as a birth-right, and refused to fall in with the arrangement by which Judah held the post of honour and headed the march. While Judah might have refused to concede the position to Reuben, because of their own vast numerical superiority. Again, the tribe of Simeon, for the same reason, might have refused to occupy a position subordinate to that of Reuben; for the former tribe numbered 59,300, while the latter only 46,500. Other causes of dissatisfaction and dispute would also, probably, have been discovered. And the issue would have been strife, divisions, and we know not what evils. But the Lord prevents this by himself determining the arrangement of the tribes. Order is ever conducive to peace and unity. Let us cultivate order. (a)

II. Variety.

There were different standards. Each camp had its own characteristic standard. And each tribe and each father's house had its own distinctive ensign. Their order was not monotonous. Monotony is not a mark of divinity. Variety characterises the works of God. Countries differ in their climates, conformations, productions, etc. The features of landscapes differ. "Star differeth from star." Trees, flowers, faces, minds differ. Hence it seems reasonable that we should find different ensigns in the Church of Christ. With one spirit there may be many forms. With unity of the inner life there may be great variety of outward development. There are many denominations in the Christian Church because there are differences of mind, temperament, degrees of education and culture, etc., in those who compose the Church. This variety is promotive of health, activity, usefulness. (b)

III. Unity.

All the tribes were gathered "about the tabernacle of the congregation," as around a common centre. They had

different standards and ensigns, but constituted one nation. Their position in relation to the tabernacle illustrates—

1. *The dependence of all on God.* All the tribes looked to Him for support, provision, protection, direction, etc.

2. *The access of all to God.* The tabernacle was the sign of the presence of God with them. It was in their midst; not very far from any of them. All of them in the appointed way might approach Him in worship. Through Christ we both (Jews and Gentiles) "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (See Ephes. ii. 18-22.)

3. *The reverence of all towards God.* They were to pitch "over against the tabernacle." Probably the tribes were 2,000 cubits distant from it. Compare Joshua iii. 4. They were thus to encamp around the sacred place, that no stranger might draw near to it; and the Levites were to encamp near the tabernacle on every side, that the people themselves might not draw too near to it, but might be taught to regard it with respect and reverence. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." Now, all Christians are one in their relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. All depend upon God as revealed in Him; all approach unto God through Him; all reverence God in Him. The various denominations of Christians constitute the one Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the centre of unity. As Christians draw nearer to Him they will draw nearer to each other; not in uniformity, but in increasing nearness to Jesus Christ will the increase of true unity be found. "Uniformity is the creation of man; unity is the inspiration of God. The first can be made by a mask; the latter must be created or imparted by the Spirit of God. Uniformity is compatible with death; unity is inseparable from real and conscious life. Uniformity is the churchyard; unity is the church itself of the living God. All may be uniform, yet all may be dead; none can have real, inner, spiritual, vital

unity, without having that truth which God inspires, and that life of which Christ is the Giver."

IV. Security.

The tabernacle of God in the midst of the camp was a guarantee of their safety. We may apply to them the words of one of their poets of a subsequent age: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved," etc.

His presence in their midst would tend to—

1. *Quell their fears.* He had wrought marvellous things on their behalf in the past; He was ever doing great things for them. Then why should they quail before any danger or enemy?

2. *Inspire their confidence and courage.* It should have given to them the assurance of victory in conflict, etc. This seems to have been the idea of Moses:

"When the ark set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." Distance from God is weakness and peril to His Church. Nearness to Him is safety and power. Living in vital union with Him all-conquering might is ours.

Conclusion—

1. Let us learn sincerely and heartily to recognise as members of the Christian Israel all who have the Christian spirit, however widely they may differ from us in forms and opinions.

2. Let us think less of our *isms*, and more of Christ's Church; less of theological and ecclesiastical systems, and more of Christ's Gospel; less of human authority and patronage, and more of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Order is Heaven's first law—a glorious law,
Seen in those pure and beauteous isles
of light
That come and go, as circling months
fulfil
Their high behest. Nor less on earth
discern'd,
'Mid rocks snow-clad, or wastes of herb-
less sand,
Throughout all climes, beneath all vary-
ing skies,
Fixing for e'en the smallest flower that
blooms
Its place of growth. *Milton.*

(b) Let us go down and stand by the beach of the great, irregular sea, and count whether the thunder of it is not out of time. One—two—here comes a well-formed wave at last, trembling a little at the top, but, on the whole, orderly. So, crash among the shingle, and up as far as this grey pebble; now stand by and watch! Another! Ah, careless wave! why couldn't you have kept your crest on? It is all gone away into spray, striking up against the cliffs there. I thought as much—missed the mark by a couple of feet! Another! How now, impatient one! couldn't you have waited till your friend's reflux was done with, instead of robbing yourself up with it in that unseemly manner? You go for nothing. A fourth, and a goodly one at last. What think we of yonder slow rise and crystalline hollow, without a flaw? Steady, good wave; not so fast, not so fast: Where are you coming to? By our architectural word, this is too bad; two yards over the mark, and ever so much of

you in our face besides; and a wave which we had some hope of, behind there, broken all to pieces out at sea, and laying a great white table-cloth of foam all the way to the shore, as if the marine gods were to dine off it! Alas! for these unhappy arrow-shots of Nature; she will never hit her mark with those unruly waves of hers, nor get one of them into the ideal shape, if we wait for her a thousand years. . . . But the sea was meant to be irregular! Yes, and were not also the leaves and the blades of grass; and, in a sort, as far as may be without mark of sin, even the countenance of man? Or would it be pleasanter and better to have us all alike, and numbered on our foreheads, that we might be known one from the other? — *Ruskin.*

The sun comes forth. And first I perceive the chick-weed blossoming, almost inconspicuous. It is born again of the sun, and shows the sun's power. Just beyond there is a clump of violets. They are born again out of death into life by the power of the sun. Further on are bulbs of various kinds. And each develops in its own way. (One has one style of leaf or bloom, and another another. And they multiply as the sun grows warmer, till the woods and fields swarm with myriads of growths, some purple, some red, some white, some blue, some green, all shades, and combinations, and forms being represented. They are all born of the sun, and brought into their life and power; and yet they are widely different in their structure and appearance. Would you reduce them all to one, and have nothing but daisies, nothing but tulips, or nothing but violets? Are not God's aban-

dant riches in this, that when He creates life from death in so many ways there are presented such variations of beauty and amiableness? So it is with the truths of the Gospel. God does not make those truths the same to any two minds. If men had the subtle power of analysis, so as to seize just what they feel, and put their feelings exactly into words, I believe it would be found that no two persons on the face of the earth ever stated, or could state, their views of a fact alike. God, that never made two faces alike; God, that never made two leaves alike; God, that makes unity

with infinite diversity—He does not mean that men shall feel just alike. The amplitude of being is expressed by variations of being, that go back to essential unity, and take hold of a common root. And the attempt to bring the glowing and fervid Orientals, the staid and practical Occidentals, the mediæval minds, the artist minds, the sombre and unirradiating natures, and the light and gay natures, all to one statement of speculative truth, is as wild and preposterous as the boy's race after the rainbow. It cannot be done.—*H. W. Beecher.*

MAN IN RELATION TO ORDER, HOME, AND GOD.

(Verse 2.)

Let us inquire what God would teach by this.

I. The importance of Order in everything.

God here insists upon method in all their movements. Each was to be in his own place. He was thus teaching His people, and, through them, the world. The sojourn in the wilderness was their school-time; hence we have so much of it. In the lessons God taught them we find principles that are to guide us. God loves order in everything: He is not the author of confusion. Satan brought discord into the world. There was not a jarring note in the universe till sin came into existence. God loves order. You can see this in all His works; there is no confusion or waste in anything; nothing is neglected or left out; nothing can be improved upon. In all there is completeness and harmony. God is our pattern in this. The highest art is the best copying of nature. So in human life, the noblest, the highest is the one that follows most closely in the footprints of God. To live well is of vast importance to us, and it is impossible with disorder and confusion. In business, if there is no method, failure must be the result. In the home life, if there is no order, there must be misery. So order is essential to success in the religious life. "Let all things be done decently and in order," said Paul. The reference is to the regularity and discipline of an army: the order is as perfect as possible; and it is this

which makes all the difference between an army and a rabble. Order is the essence of beauty, strength, comfort, and usefulness.

II. The sacredness of family life.

Each was to be "with the ensign of his father's house;" his place was to be with his family. The people had been slaves; and slavery saps the foundation of family life. God has to teach them the sacredness of the family circle. There can be no real national life unless the family life be pure and sacred. *Men only* live in families. The brutes dwell in herds. God has given man the family instinct; and the Bible and religion ever tend to strengthen, purify, and ennoble it. The higher a man rises in the scale of being, the deeper is his interest in his family. The more we love God, the more we love one another. Divine love sanctifies and elevates the human. God taught the people here to respect their families. Many parents seem to be anxious only to feed, clothe, and help their children for this life. Are their children brutes? Are they to perish like the beasts? Or, have they a soul? Parents, strive to make your homes abodes of peace and blessedness, centres of attraction and holy influence, so that your children may gather round the ensign, etc. God's eye is on our family life.

III. The right way to feel and to act towards Himself.

They were to be "far off about the tabernacle." True life is impossible apart from right esteem of God. He

is the centre, the pivot of all true life. As amongst this people, so in His Church, God is the attracting power, etc. He is in the midst to rule, protect, and guide. As there is no circle without a centre, so the Church falls to pieces unless God be in the midst. Love to Him brings His people together, and binds them together. The earth is made of particles: gravitation, as it attracts each particle to itself, binds them together so as to form the earth. Thus God attracting each soul to Himself, binds them together as a Church. We are to turn around Him as the planets around the sun, receiving our light, our beauty, our influence from Him.

"Truth is dual." The above is only half the truth; the other half is involved in the expression, "far off." In nature there are two great forces at work—the centripetal and the centrifugal. If either of these were to fail, the earth would be wrecked. In religion

we have two similar forces. God must attract us; He is the centre of our soul. But we must also keep our distance; we must be "far off." There is no religion without reverence. God is great and holy. The people were to be "far off" as well as "about the tabernacle." Divine things are to be treated with respect and handled with reverence. There is no true religion without awe; no true love without fear. While we lovingly trust God as our Father, let us give Him the respect due to His name.

Learn.

1. *The deep interest God takes in His people.* He wants them to be the very best possible—to be perfect.

2. *How religion affects the whole of man and His life.* It teaches us how to act in all things. There is nothing above or beneath its notice that affects us. It is then our best Friend. If it is not yours, seek it without delay.—*David Lloyd.*

THE CAMP.

(Verse 2.)

When Balaam looks down upon the outstretched camp of Israel, his very soul expands. It must break forth into praise. The beauty captivates. The order charms. (See chap. xxiv. 5-9.) Let us, too, view this favoured camp.

I. The Tents.

Not splendid palaces; poor tents. They are the pilgrim-dwellings of a pilgrim-troop—the short-lived homes of short-lived sojourners. Reminds of mortal state. These frames have one original—the dust. Is it not folly, then, to pamper and admire the flesh? At best these bodies are a tent. How soon they crumble! The tents must fall; but when? Perchance this very hour. Is he not then the fool of fools, who boasts him of to-morrow's dawn? Learn how fleeting is life's day. When I go hence, is an abiding mansion mine? Flesh is a mean abode. This thought commends the grace of Jesus. He scorned not to assume it. No man

was ever man more thoroughly than Jesus. He thus descended that He might bear the curse. He sought a lowly tent to do a godlike work. But soon the degradation passed. The cross was triumph's car. Manhood now shines in Him arrayed in light of Deity. And all, whom faith makes one with Him, shall soon behold and share this lustre. Weakness and frailty shall put on unfading freshness.

II. The Order.

Let Israel's camp be now more closely scanned. What perfect regularity appears! Arrangement is complete, etc. Our God delights in order. Where He presides, confusion vanishes. Is it not so in every Christian's heart? When Jesus takes the throne, wise rule prevails, disturbing lusts lie down, etc. Is it not so in Christian life? Each duty occupies its stated post. The home, the closet, the public, the world, in turn have claims, in turn are served. How

different is the worldling's day! It seems an upset hive, etc.

But in Israel's camp each tribe has its place. . . . God fixes all the bounds, and all the bounds are gladly kept. The same all-ruling mind disposes now each member of Christ's body. Each enters on the stage of life, as God is pleased to call. Each runs a pre-ordained course. Each disappears, when the allotted task is done. We see this clear arrangement throughout the Church's history. . . . Bow humbly before this ordering mind, then discontent will not arise; no murmurings will mourn an obscure lot, a grievous burden, a lengthened pilgrimage, or an early grave.

III. The Position.

"About the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." As the planets circle the sun, so these surround the sanctuary. God is the centre; they form the wide circumference.

Is there no meaning here? God in Christ Jesus is the centre, the heart, the life, the strength, the shield, the joy of His believing flock.

Is there no warning here? Let Christians ponder this Camp's plan when called to fix their dwellings upon earth. When weighing the advantages of place, the foremost thought should be, Is God known here? Are His pure truths here clearly taught? Was Lot a gainer, when his eye only coveted the

fertile plains? Can fairer fields, or sweeter prospects, make amends for a cold blank within? Can air-salubrity repay for inward sickness and a spiritual decline?

IV. The Standard.

A standard floats above each tribe. Beneath the well-known sign they rest, and by its side they march. Believers have an ensign too. The banner over them is Jesu's love. (Song, ii. 4.) The standard is a pledge of safety. Mighty foes hate and assail, plot and rage, etc.; but they must fail. Beneath it there is sweet repose. The weary spirit and the worn-out flesh can often watch no more. But as is the vineyard of the Lord, so is His camp. "I the Lord do keep it," etc. (Isa. xxvii. 3.)

Beside it there is victory. Many have fought beneath the Gospel-banner, and all have triumphed. They who go boldly forward, looking unto Jesus, assuredly prevail. (2 Cor. ii. 14.) Happy camp, where Jesus is salvation's Captain; His cross, salvation's ensign; His heaven, salvation's rest!

Believer, glory in your standard, and be steadfast. Cling constantly to Christ. Let every company, moment, place, witness your firm resolves. Wave now and ever the glorious ensign—"Christ is all." Thus dwell within the camp, and you will reign upon the throne.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

ASPECTS OF HONOUR.

(Verses 3-9.)

"It seems to us," says Dr. Cumming, "an uninteresting and unprofitable exercise to read the list of the tribes and their names, the camps and their numbers, the captains and their names, who together composed the mighty host that took their exodus from Egypt, through the desert, to the land of Canaan; but surely it was important in the circumstances in which they were placed that each and all should be recorded—it was important with reference to the separate and distinct maintenance of the tribes—that the promise of the

Messiah from a specific tribe might be vindicated and established in the fulness of the times. In the next place, this mighty crowd, numbering six hundred thousand men, able to bear arms—and that must have amounted, with camp followers, to nearly two millions—a vast population in the desert—must of necessity be reduced to some order of regiments or companies, in order that authority might be exercised where it was needed; that the means of defence might be had recourse to most speedily and effectually where they were

required; and that each loving his own company, each individual loving by preference his own tribe best, might yet, as a tribe mingled with the rest, have that wider feeling, which recognised an Israelite under whatever standard he was, in the great army of which they formed a part. For these and other reasons, God commanded Moses and Aaron to make the arrangements here specified; and what God saw useful to command, it cannot have been useless to record, and it may not be altogether unprofitable to read. We must not think that the chapter that does not personally benefit us spiritually is therefore of no use. It is possible for true Christians often to be somewhat selfish, and to think that that cannot be useful which does not benefit the individual, or that that cannot play a part important in the whole which does not produce a deep, a spiritual, and profitable impression upon each. We must learn to look wider, to extend our horizon, and to learn that there are parts in the Bible which may not bring personal instruction to us, but which nevertheless may have a force in relation to the whole book that vindicates it from the assaults of the sceptic; sets out its great truths in bolder relief and in clearer light; and even those parts which we cannot see or comprehend the use, the place, and the necessity of now, if we can only exercise a little patience we shall know, and understand, and see the usefulness of more clearly hereafter. There are many parts in this globe that we cannot understand the end of; we cannot see the use perhaps of so much water; we cannot see the necessity of those large wasted and blasted deserts. But yet I have no doubt they have a use, and are subserving a purpose; and we must not deny that God made this or made that because we cannot see the purpose that it subserves in the great economy of the universe. I believe that with the exception of what sin has done, there is not a star in the sky, however tiny it looks to us, that is not necessary to the balance of the universe; and that if one star were to fall from its socket, or one orb to be shat-

tered in its march, a shock might be felt that would influence injuriously at least the whole solar system. And it may be that in this blessed Book, which is God's inspired Book, some of those dull and dry passages, as they must appear to us personally, are probably subserving great and ultimate purposes, which we may not see now, but shall see hereafter."

Our text gives us the account of the composition of the first camp, which was situated on the east side, toward the rising of the sun. This post of honour was conferred upon Judah. To him was given the first standard. With him were Issachar and Zebulun. These three tribes were descended from the three younger sons of Leah; and their union under one standard was, therefore, an appropriate arrangement. To each tribe a captain was appointed; these captains being the "princes of the tribes of their fathers," who assisted Moses and Aaron in the numbering. Here, then, are differences of rank ordered by God. One tribe has the most distinguished position of all. Three other tribes are placed each at the head of a camp; and in each tribe one person was appointed by God as captain, or prince, or commander-in-chief. Leaders and rulers are essential to society. "To have neither superiors nor inferiors would be to breathe a stifling atmosphere of mediocrity. Natural leadership is the soul of common action." Inasmuch as the most distinguished place was assigned to the tribe of Judah we take as our subject: *Aspects of Honour*.

We see here—

1. Honour wisely conferred.

The tribe of Judah was the most numerous and powerful of all the tribes. This was a good reason for placing it in the most prominent and illustrious position. Honours of title and place are not always wisely conferred. They are sometimes bestowed upon those who are neither distinguished in their abilities, exalted in their character, nor exemplary in their conduct. This is a sad perversion of things. (a) But the truest and highest honours are those of

character and conduct, and these are attainable through the grace of God unto all men.

"Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent,
The grand old gardener and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

Tennyson

The honour of being children of the Most High, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," of being made "kings and priests unto God," of sharing in the spirit and service of Christ, we may all attain through Him. But in these honours there are differences of degree. There are some to whom will be given "an abundant entrance," while others will "be saved yet so as by fire."

II. Honour in relation with duty and responsibility.

The tribe of Judah in being appointed to the place of honour in the Israelitish host had also the place of peril. Being at the head of the camp, if there were dangers to be met or foes to be encountered, they must first enter the lists against them. In their case rank and risk, distinction and duty, were united. The places of distinction should ever be for those who render the most and best service. And the highest places in both the Church and the State involve gravest responsibilities and most arduous duties. He who treads the path of duty faithfully and bravely will find in due time that it leads to the most unfading honours. (See notes and illustrations on ch. i. 4-16.) (*b*)

III. Honour as connected with parental influence.

Judah was the first of the sons of Jacob who was blessed by the venerable patriarch "when he was a-dying." Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were censured by him. The parental blessing

in the case of Judah has not been in vain. And in the honour now put upon the tribe the influence of that blessing is still further manifest (see Gen. xlix. 8-12). It is in the power of every parent instrumentally to bless his children. By wise teaching, holy example, and believing prayer, parents may confer the greatest advantages on their offspring, and aid them to reach the highest honours. Let parents seek thus to bless their children. (*c*)

Let the children of godly parents appreciate their privileges in this respect. (*d*)

IV. Honour as related to future greatness.

The dying patriarch had predicted that Judah should be the ruling tribe; he promised to Judah a kingdom and sovereignty. Many years have since passed away; and still Judah has neither lawgiver nor sceptre. But here are two things to encourage faith in the patriarchal prediction—viz., the numerical superiority of the tribe, and the post of honour assigned to it. Ages more were to pass away before the prediction was fulfilled; but the honour now conferred on the tribe would encourage faith in its predicted destiny. Its natural tendency would be to stimulate them to—

1. *Believe in their destiny.*
2. *Work for their destiny.*
3. *Wait for their destiny.*

In like manner let every blessing which we receive from God be to us a pledge of our full and final salvation. Let every privilege conferred upon us increase our assurance of the splendid honours which await us hereafter. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," etc. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne," etc. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Let none presume
To wear an undeserved dignity.
O, that estates, degrees, and offices,
Were not derived corruptly! and that clear
honour

Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!
How many then should cover, that stand bare!
How many be commanded, that command!
How much low peasantry would then be gleaned
From the true seed of honour! and how much
honour

Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times,
To be new varnish'd!—*Shakespeare.*

"The Merchant of Venice," ii. 8.

(b) Not once or twice in our rough island-story

The path of duty was the way to glory:
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outredden
All voluptuous garden roses.
Not once or twice in our fair island-story
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He, that ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the topping crags of duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.

Tennyson.

(c) The voice of parents is the voice of gods,
For to their children they are Heaven's lieutenants,

Made fathers not for common uses merely
Of procreation (beasts and birds would be
As noble then as we are); but to steer
The wanton freight of youth through storms
and dangers,
Which with full sails they bear upon, and
straighten

The mortal line of life they bend so often.
For these are we made fathers, and for these
May challenge duty on our children's part.
Obedience is the sacrifice of angels,
Whose form you carry.

Shakespeare.

Mr. Irving, in his "Life of Washington," brings to the knowledge of the public, we believe for the first time, a beautiful incident in the religious training of the youthful George when left to the sole care of his widowed mother. Of her general course, Mr. Irving remarks, with fine discrimination: "Endowed with plain, direct good sense, thorough con-

scientiousness, and prompt decision, she governed her family strictly, but kindly, exacting deference while she inspired affection. George, being her eldest son, was thought to be her favourite, yet she never gave him undue preference, and the implicit deference exacted from him in childhood continued to be habitually observed by him to the day of her death. He inherited from her a high temper and a spirit of command, but her early precepts and example taught him to restrain and govern that temper, and to square his conduct on the exact principles of equity and justice." No Maternal Association has ever devised a better principle to be observed in training children than this of Mary Washington—"exact-
acting deference while she inspired affection." How rarely do we see these two essential elements in family government justly combined in either parent! From this general view Mr. Irving passes to the following incident: "Tradition gives an interesting picture of the widow with her little flock gathered round her, as was her daily wont, reading to them lessons of religion and morality out of some standard work. Her favourite volume was Sir Matthew Hale's 'Contemplations, Moral and Divine.' The admirable maxims therein contained, for outward action as well as self-government, sank deep into the mind of George, and doubtless had a great influence in forming his character. They certainly were exemplified in his conduct through life. This mother's manual, bearing his mother's name, Mary Washington, written with her own hand, was ever preserved by him with filial care, and may still be seen in the archives of Mount Vernon. A precious document! Let those who wish to know the moral foundation of his character consult its pages." Would that the minds and hearts of all our youth might be trained after such a model!—*New York Independent.*

(d) Hold fast to home influences and remembrances; and recollect that he who tries to shame you out of a father's and a mother's fear, and out of obedience to them, tries to steal the most precious treasure you have. He that is trying to destroy the influence of your parents upon you is trying to take from you the most faithful love you ever knew. You shall lie down in the grave when you shall have traversed forty or eighty years of life, without having found another friend who has borne as much for you, or done as much for you, as your father or your mother.—*H. W. Beecher.*

THE MERCY OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

(Verses 10-16.)

We have here the account of the composition of the second camp. Its place was south of the tabernacle. At

its head was placed the tribe of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob and Leah, and with it were associated the tribe of

Simeon, the second son of Leah, and that of Gad, the eldest son of Leah's handmaid, Zilpah.

Reuel, in verse 14, is doubtless an error of some copyist, and should be *Deuel*, as in chap. i. 14. Several MSS. and Versions read *Deuel* in this place.

In this section we have—

I. An example of the continuance of the consequences of sin.

How is it that Reuben, being the first-born, does not take the first place? Why was Judah, the fourth son, preferred before him? Because Reuben had been guilty of the most shocking incest. (See Gen. xxxv. 22; xlix. 4; 1 Chron. v. 1.) He sinned grievously, and now his posterity suffer loss thereby. Sin when it is done is not done with. It lives in its results in the person of the sinner, and in the persons of others who are related to the sinner. Sin may be repented of, confessed, forgiven; and yet many of its consequences may remain, and that for many generations.

(a)

1. *The Sacred Scriptures declare this.* (See Exod. xx. 5; Lev. xxvi. 39; Lam. v. 7; Luke, xi. 49-51.)

2. *The connexion between one generation and another necessitates this.* The consequences of the vices of parents are transmitted to their offspring.

3. *Our social relationships necessitate this.* We are ever exerting an influence upon others, and being influenced by others. One corrupt character corrupts others. One holy character tends to purify and exalt others.

4. *The facts of human life attest this.* The drunkard may forsake his drunkenness, may seek and obtain the Divine forgiveness, may lead a new life, yet many of the results of his sinful indulgences will remain in himself, and if he be a parent will be transmitted to his children. The spendthrift may abandon his reckless courses; but it requires many years, perhaps more than one generation, to repair the shattered fortunes and restore the family estate to its ancient prosperity. Man may turn to God late in life, may be pardoned, accepted, saved; but he cannot recover the years spent in the service of

sin, or undo the evil which he has wrought. The guilt is taken away; but the loss, and much more than the loss, remains. God is just. His laws are immutable. They cannot be set at nought, or disregarded, without incurring stern and certain penalties. Let these solemn facts restrain us from sin. Let parents especially lay them to heart; and for the sake of their offspring, let them eschew evil, and cultivate virtue.

"Parents bequeath not to your children's lot
The shame that from them no device can take,
The blemish that will never be forgot."

II. An example of the exercise of the Divine mercy in mitigating the consequences of sin.

Notwithstanding the horrible sin of Reuben, he was not altogether cut off from his father's house. Though he forfeited his birthright he was not exiled from the family. His posterity was not cast out of the chosen people. His tribe was not degraded to the lowest rank among the tribes, but placed in an inferior position to that of Judah only. "So then," says Attersoll, "albeit he was punished justly, he was punished gently. Thus God dealeth evermore. He correcteth both moderately and mercifully; and as the physician allayeth the bitterness of the potion with some sweetness, so God assuageth the greatness of His punishment with some mildness and favour that He mingleth with it." We have illustrations of this in the case of Miriam (ch. xii.) and that of David (2 Sam. xxiv. 10-16). (Comp. Ps. lxxxix. 30-33; Isa. liv. 7, 8; Lam. iii. 31-33.) In further elucidation and confirmation of our position, let the following points be noted:—

1. *God delighteth not in judgment, but in mercy.* "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy," etc. (Psa. ciii. 8-11.) Mark the tenderness of His appeal to His faithless and rebellious people, "Why will ye be stricken any more?" (Isa. i. 5.) "He delighteth in mercy." (b)

2. *He is our Father, and deals with us as a Father.* He is not simply our Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign, but our Father. When He punishes, He

does so as a Father. "Consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee" (comp. 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15).

3. *In His dealings with us He duly considers our weakness; our exposedness to temptation, etc.* Our temperament, tendencies, temptations, trials, etc., are all known to Him. In His judgments all these things are taken into consideration. He never judges harshly. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him: for He knoweth our frame," etc. (Psa. ciii. 13-18)

His mercy is ever in exercise mitigating the severity of the consequences of sin, and tempering the sternness of the woes of life.

Conclusion:

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If sin were mortal, then thirty years would swing the world over into the millennium; we should bury it with the next generation. But it is not mortal. It is not barren, but prolific; it propagates itself; it has paternal functions, and sends its children out in swarms to possess the earth. I wish you all to understand that whatever evil you are tolerating in your lives, will live after you are gone; you will pass away, but this shall not pass away. One immortality you will take with you at death; another you will leave behind. It shall stand above your grave when the mound is fashioned and the mourners depart; and shake itself as a strong man rejoiceth in his strength, and go forth as one of the forces of the world. It will be impersonal; it will have no name; it will show no face; and yet it will be you, your worse half unchecked, unrestrained by the good that was once mated with it, and that kept it within bounds. It is in the moral and spiritual as it is in the material world. It is said that one cannot stir the air with a sound so soft and slight that it will ever cease to be a sound. The words we speak, whether of love or hate, whether pure or vile, start pulsations in the air that will never cease to throb. You cannot open your lips and start a motion in the atmosphere, which shall not, like a wave on a shoreless sea, whose forces are within itself and adequate, roll on and on for ever. An oath once spoken sounds for ever in the universe as an oath; it is an explosion whose reverberations can never die. They roll around all continents; they crash against the sides of all mountains; they beat discordantly in and upon the atmosphere of all worlds; the devils hear them, and rejoice; the holy, and fly in dismay. And, at the Judgment, why may we

1. *Let the mercy of God deter us from sin.* Shall we be so base as to sin against so much kindness?

2. *Let the mercy of God encourage our confidence in Him.* In sorrow let us seek Him; for he pities, etc. In guilt let us seek Him; for He forgives, etc.

3. *Let this example of the mercy of God lead us to be patient under life's trials.* Like those of Reuben, our trials are not so severe as we have deserved, and they are tempered by the rich mercy of God. He is ever evolving good out of them, making them by His grace the occasion of strength and blessing to us.

4. *Let this example of the mercy of God encourage the wicked to forsake sin and seek salvation.* "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. (Isa. lv. 6, 7.)

not suppose that these sounds shall all come back to us—the good in soothing music, and the evil in torturing discord, and every man shall be judged according to the word of his mouth? Indeed, it seems to me that everything in man that is of the mind and soul is immortal.—*W. H. H. Murray.*

(b) Man having destroyed that which God delighted in, the beauty of his soul, fell into an evil portion, and, being seized on by the Divine justice, grew miserable, and condemned to an incurable sorrow.

In the midst of these sadnesses God remembered His own creature, and pitied it; and, by His mercy, rescued him from the hands of His power, and the sword of His justice, and the guilt of His punishment, and the disorder of his sin, and placed him in that order of good things where he ought to have stood. It was mercy that preserved the noblest of God's creatures here below; he who stood condemned and undone under all the other attributes of God, was saved and rescued by His mercy; that it may be evident that God's mercy is above all His works, and above all ours, greater than the creation, and greater than our sins. As is His majesty, so is His mercy, that is, without measures and without rules, sitting in heaven and filling all the world, calling for a duty that He may give a blessing, making man that He may save him, punishing him that He may preserve him. And God's justice bowed down to His mercy, and all His power passed into mercy, and His omniscience converted into care and watchfulness, into providence and observation for man's avail; and heaven gave its influence for man, and rained showers for our food and drink; and the attributes and acts of God sat at the foot of mercy, and all that mercy descended

upon the head of man. . . . For, ever since the fall of Adam, who, like an unfortunate man, spent all that a wretched man could need, or a happy man could have, our life is repentance, and forgiveness is all our portion; and though angels were objects of God's bounty, yet man only is, in proper speaking, the object of His mercy; and the mercy which dwelt in an infinite circle became confined to a little ring, and dwelt here below; and here shall dwell below, till it hath carried all God's portion up to heaven, where it shall reign and glory upon our crowned heads for ever and ever! . . . I must tell concerning God's mercy as we do concerning God Himself, that He is that great fountain of which we all drink, and the great rock of which we all eat,

and on which we all dwell, and under whose shadow we are all refreshed. God's mercy is all this; and we can only draw the great lines of it, and reckon the constellations of our hemisphere, instead of telling the number of the stars; we only can reckon what we feel and what we live by; and though there be, in every one of these lines of life, enough to engage us for ever to do God service, and to give Him praises, yet it is certain there are very many mercies of God on us, and toward us, and concerning us, which we neither feel, nor see, nor understand as yet; but yet we are blessed by them, and are preserved and secure, and we shall then know them, when we come to give God thanks in the festivities of an eternal Sabbath.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

THE TABERNACLE IN THE MIDST OF THE HOST.

(Verse 17.)

We have spoken of two of the standards, and two other remain to be spoken of. In this verse, Moses interlaceth the placing and situation of the tabernacle, which was so environed with the Levites, and they flanked and fortified with the whole host, that it remained in the midst, in a place of the greatest safety, fittest for access in regard of the people, and hardest for access in regard of their enemies.

I. The Reasons for placing the Tabernacle after this manner.

1. God doth hereby admonish them, that they should always have Him before their eyes, lest they should forget His worship or offend Him with their sins (comp. Lev. xxvi. 11, 12).

2. He had respect indifferently unto all the tribes. If any others had pitched their tents farther than from the Tabernacle, they would have quarrelled and complained that they had been contemned and despised.

3. The Levites were hereby put in mind of their duty, and therefore are lodged about it.

II. The Uses of placing the Tabernacle after this manner.

1. It assurcth us that God will ever be in the midst of us, and settle His rest and residence among us (comp. Lev. xxvi. 11, 12; Ezek. xxvii. 27). We must know how God is said to dwell among us. Difference between His general presence and His special

presence. His general presence is in all places; His special presence is in His Church. His general presence is of His power; His special presence is of His grace and favour. There is a common manner of God's being everywhere, and in all things, by His essence: there is a special way of God's being present, as that which is loved is present in him that loveth (comp. John xiv. 23). (1) God is joined unto us in the person of His own only Son *Emmanuel*—*i.e., God with us.* We are made members of His body (see Matt. xxviii. 20). (2). We have with Him the preaching of the Gospel, whereby God is, as it were, brought down to reside and remain among us. (3) We have the promise of His presence and the seals thereof in His Sacraments, whereby we are at one with Him, and He with us (see Gal. iii. 27; John vi. 54-56; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17). (4) When we come together in the Church to call upon His name, He is near unto us, and most familiar with us (see Matt. xviii. 20). (5) He dwelleth among us whensoever He preserveth us from evil, and delivereth us from our enemies. . . . Let us take heed to walk in fear before Him, etc. (see Deut. vi. 12-15; 2 Cor. vi. 16-18). We ought to walk always as in God's presence, and to consider evermore that His eye is upon us.

2. It serveth to teach us to what end God hath instituted Civil States and

Commonwealths in this world—to wit, to be stays and props to the Church, that the people of God may assemble together in peace and quietness. (1) Let all persons, princes, and people, high and low, do good to the Church of God, and employ their best endeavours to promote the glory of God and the safety of the Church (see Pss. cxxii. 6, 7; cxxxii. 1-5). (2) It is the duty of all persons to assemble together to hear His word. . . . If we would dwell with God, let us repair to His house; if we would see Him, we shall see Him there; if we would hear Him, we shall hear Him there; if we would know Him, we shall know Him there, for His face is to be seen there, His voice is to be heard there, His presence is to be found there (see Pss. xxvii. 4; xlii. 1; lxxxiv. 2). (3) Let us not stand in fear of any enemies, as if they would bear and beat

down the Church before them; neither let us forsake our mother, for fear of troubles that may come upon her. . . . The Church is set in a safe place; they shall not be able to hurt it: it hath a safe Keeper, that neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; they shall not be able to destroy it: the gates of hell and the power of the devil are set against it, but they shall never have victory over it (see Deut. vii. 21, 22).

3. It serveth to conclude the full and final happiness of the faithful, which is begun in this life, but shall be consummated in the end of this world. Then will God dwell with us, and we shall dwell with Him; then we shall be admitted into His presence, and never be cast out; then no evil shall touch us, or come near us, and no good thing shall be wanting unto us that we can desire (see Rev. xxi. 3, 4; 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. vii. 15-17; xxi. 22-27).—*W. Attersoll.*

THE CAMP OF EPHRAIM, AND ITS SUGGESTIONS.

(Verses 18-24)

In these verses we have an account of the third camp, which was posted to the west of the Tabernacle. It consisted of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, all descendants of Rachel. Looking at this camp homiletically we discover in it—

I. An illustration of the Divine Sovereignty.

Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph by his wife Asenath. Though Manasseh was the elder, yet Ephraim was placed at the head of this camp. "The first indication we have of the ascendancy of Ephraim over Manasseh is in the blessing of the children by Jacob (Gen. xlviii.). The intention of Joseph was evidently that the right hand of Jacob should convey the ampler blessing to the head of Manasseh, his first-born, and he had so arranged the young men. But the result was otherwise ordained."

Jacob persisted in setting Ephraim before Manasseh. "God chose from the beginning," says Bishop Patrick, "in several instances, to prefer the

younger before the elder, as Abel before Cain; Shem before Japheth; Isaac before Ishmael; Jacob before Esau; Judah and Joseph before Reuben; and here Ephraim before Manasseh; and Moses before Aaron; and David, the youngest of all, before his elder brethren—to show that the Divine benefits were not limited to the order of nature, but dispensed freely, according to God's most wise goodness." God bestows all His gifts freely, according to His own good pleasure, both when He will, and where He will, and to whom He will. Our salvation from beginning to end is owing to His sovereign favour. We have nothing of our own. "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" etc. God is debtor to no man. We have no claim upon His bounty. If He should withhold His blessing from any of us, we should have no just ground of complaint against Him. We, however, do well ever to bear in mind that *His is the sovereignty of a Being of infinite wisdom,*

righteousness, and love. It is the sovereignty of GOD, the Supremely Good. (a) Though we know not the reasons of many of His decisions and doings, yet we know that in them all He is actuated by motives and seeks the accomplishment of ends which are worthy of Himself. Let us then, like the Hebrew poets, rejoice in God's sovereignty, and celebrate it in reverent and hearty songs.

II. An illustration of the sacredness of family ties

These three tribes which constitute this camp were all descended from Rachel, and were the whole of her descendants. We may fairly conclude that this was one reason, and a chief one, why they were grouped together. To the eye of God family ties are sacred things. Jesus our Lord "was subject unto" His parents. On the cross, amidst His own fierce agonies of both body and soul, He was mindful of His mother, spake to her, and committed her to the care of His beloved disciple. The ties of kinship are of the closest, tenderest, strongest, holiest nature; and should be so regarded. In our families let us cultivate mutual forbearance, and helpfulness, and holy love; "for without hearts there is no home." Let us make our houses *homes*; the scenes of confidence, peace, affection, and worship. "It is just as possible to keep a calm house as a clean house, a cheerful house, an orderly house, as a furnished house, if the heads set themselves to do so. Where is the difficulty of consulting each other's weakness, as well as each other's wants; each other's tempers, as well as each other's health; each other's comfort, as well as each other's character? Oh! it is by leaving the peace at home to chance, instead of pursuing it by system, that so many houses are unhappy." (b)

III. An illustration of the Divine regard for the weak.

This was the least numerous of the four great divisions, and therefore by direction of God it was appointed to that position in which there was the last danger. Tenderly God cares for the feeble. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." What a rich fund of comfort and encouragement there is here—

1. *For those who are physically afflicted.*

2. *For those whose faith is feeble.*

3. *For those who are sorely tried.*

He is acquainted with us altogether; and in our great need He will bestow upon us the tenderest care and the richest grace. (c)

Conclusion:

Let us unfalteringly trust in God. Let us rejoice in the sovereignty of so wise and kind a Being.

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might,
His every act pure blessing is;
His path unsullied light.

Leave to His sovereign sway,
To choose and to command:
So shalt thou wondering own His way,
How wise, how strong His hand!

Thou comprehend'st Him not:
Yet earth and heaven tell
God sits as Sovereign on the throne;
He ruleth all things well.

Thou seest our weakness, Lord,
Our hearts are known to Thee;
O lift Thou up the sinking hand,
Confirm the feeble knee.

Let us in life and death,
Boldly Thy truth declare;
And publish with our latest breath,
Thy love and guardian care."

P. Gerhard.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to Himself as their entire Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon Him in regard of their being and well-being. The first cause of everything hath an unquestion-

able dominion of propriety in it upon the score of justice. By the law of nations, the first finder of a country is esteemed the rightful possessor and lord of that country, and the first inventor of an art hath a right of exercising it. If a man hath a just claim of

dominion over that thing whose materials were not of his framing, but form only the addition of a new figure from his skill; as a limner over his picture, the cloth whereof he never made, nor the colours wherewith he draws it were never endued by him with their distinct qualities, but only he applies them by his art to compose such a figure; much more hath God a rightful claim of dominion over His creatures, whose entire being, both in matter and form, and every particle of their excellency, was breathed out by the word of His mouth. He did not only give the matter a form, but bestowed upon the matter itself a being; it was formed by none to His hand, as the matter is on which an artist works. He had the being of all things in His own power, and it was at His choice whether He would impart it or no; there can be no juster and stronger ground of a claim than this. A man hath a right to a piece of brass or gold by his purchase, but when by his engraving he hath formed it into an excellent statue, there results an increase of his right upon the account of his artifice. God's creation of the matter of man gave Him a right over man; but His creation of him in so eminent an excellency, with reason to guide him, a clear eye of understanding to discern light from darkness, and truth from falsehood, a freedom of will to act accordingly, and an original righteousness as the varnish and beauty of all; here is the strongest foundation for a claim of authority over man, and the strongest obligation on man for subjection to God.—*Charnocke*.

(b) Families are not isolated individuals, but the descendants of their fathers, and therefore essentially members one of another; God himself being the Father of all the families of the universe. What can be more interesting than to contemplate the intelligent universe, as consisting of endlessly multiplied bonds of fatherhood and childhood; and all these held in the strong unity of one Divine Fatherhood and one Divine Sonship?

Family relationship is therefore a very sacred thing. Its root being not in the creation, but in God. And though we shall not find on earth any development worthy of its holy root, nevertheless, the flower which fills the world with choicest fragrance is family affection. It is capable of becoming most heavenly, since the Eternal Father is Himself the spring of parental, as His Eternal Son is of filial love. Therefore, also, family affections are capable of ceaseless cultivation. There is nothing to hinder family love from becoming evermore deeper, stronger, and lovelier. If it be so strong and so precious among fallen creatures, what must it be among the perfect? If family life on the earth gives rise, as it

often does, to a very paradise of courtesies and tender sanctities, what must family life be in the immediate Presence, and under the direct influence, of the Infinite Father and His Only Begotten Son? Christian parents and their children should know therefore, that in their families they have not a little world, but a little heaven to cultivate.

What a *solace to our hearts* is the assurance, that we shall never cease to be members of a family! The perfection of the great heavenly household is that it is a Household of households. We are born into a family, we grow up in a family, we die in a family, and after death, we shall not simply go into the great heaven, but to our own family, in our Father's House. "Abraham gave up the ghost, and was gathered to his people." "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace," God had said to him. All in heaven will not know us, but *our own people* will know us. We shall go to them.—*J. Pulsford*.

(c) "A bruised reed I will not break." Is there anything that grows so high, carrying up so little strength of stem, as the reed that rises twenty or thirty feet in the air, and has a stalk not larger than my finger? Now, a beast striking through the thicket, eager, with his unquenched thirst, for the cooling draught, strikes against a joint of the slender reed, shattering it so that it has but just strength to bear its own weight. So weak is it, that if there be so much wind as to lift one of its leaves, or to bend it in the least degree in either direction, it must surely break. But God says, "My gentleness is such that when I go down among men whose condition is like that of a bruised reed, I will do nothing to complete their overthrow, but will deal with them in such a way that they shall gather strength till I have sent forth judgment unto victory."

"And smoking flax I will not quench." If the flame is just dying out in a lamp it is not in danger of being suddenly extinguished, for the old warmth in the wick seems for a time to nourish and sustain it; but immediately after the wick is lighted, and before any warmth is communicated to it, the least movement is sufficient to extinguish it. Now God says, "Wherever there is a spark of grace lighted in the soul, if it flickers so that the least breath of the person who carries it, or the least motion of his hand is in danger of putting it out, I will deal so gently with him as not to quench that spark. I will treat it with such infinite tenderness that it shall grow into a flame which shall burn on for ever." And these are the symbols by which God measures His wonderful gentleness.—*H. W. Beecher*.

THE CAMP OF DAN: ASPECTS OF DIVINE SERVICE.

(Verses 25-31.)

This is the fourth great division which encamped north of the tabernacle, and brought up the rear on the march. The powerful tribe of Dan was placed at the head of it, and with it the remaining tribes, Asher and Naphtali. Dan was the fifth son of Jacob, and the first of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. Asher was the eighth son of Jacob, and the second of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid. Naphtali was own brother to Dan, being the sixth son of Jacob, and the second of Bilhah. The composition and station of this camp suggest certain homiletic points concerning the Divine service.

I. Persons of every kind and degree of faculty may find employment in the Divine service.

Each of the tribes had its position and duties in one of the four great divisions, or in the interior near to the tabernacle. Whatever its number or its peculiar characteristics, every one had its allotted place and work. It would appear that Judah was strong and courageous, while Dan was secret and subtle (see Gen. xlix. 8-12, 17); yet for Dan, as well as for Judah, there is a place in the great army of Israel. In the great work of God amongst men there is room for workers of every kind and degree of ability. And God lays claim to the services of every one. There is work suited to every one, as St. Paul clearly shows in 1 Cor. xii. Eloquence, scholarship, teaching power, courage, patience, tact, administrative ability, aptitude for the details of business, etc., may each find its appropriate sphere in the great work and warfare of the Church of Jesus Christ. Even the patient sufferer has a place in His service.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

Let this serve as—

1. *An encouragement to the feeble.*
2. *A rebuke to the slothful.* (a)

II. It is essential that even the lowest position in the Divine service should be faithfully filled.

It may appear to some that the place allotted to the camp of Dan was an inferior and obscure one. "They shall go hindmost with their standards." But it was essential that some of the tribes should occupy this position, and discharge its duties. There must be a rearguard as well as a vanguard. In building the temple the services of the hewers of wood are as indispensable as those of the skilled workmen. The blower of the organ-bellows is as necessary to secure its grand aid in worship as the accomplished musician.

"Small service is true service while it lasts;
Of friends, however humble, scorn not
one:

The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the ling'ring dewdrop from the
sun."
Wordsworth.

Moreover, great achievements are impossible apart from faithful attention to the details of the enterprise. The strength of the whole chain is not greater than that of its weakest link. The efficiency of the entire body is affected by the condition of its obscurist and feeblest member. Faithfulness in littles is imperatively demanded as a condition of success in all true and noble work. (b)

III. Even the lowest position in the Divine service is one of privilege and honour.

If the position of Dan and the two associated tribes be regarded as the lowest in the great host, yet it was a distinguished and advantageous position. They were as truly a part of the people chosen of God as those in the first camp. The privileges which those of the other camps enjoyed, they enjoyed also. The promises and prospects which encouraged the others, encouraged them also. The Lord was their God, etc. The feeblest and obscurist member of God's spiritual Israel occupies a place and sustains relationships of highest honour and richest privilege. "We are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God," etc. In calling us to any work, even the most

menial, in His service, God confers upon only the most exalted distinction. It is a call to co-operation with Himself, etc. "We are workers together with Christ."

"Our Master all the work hath done

He asks of us to-day ;

Sharing His service every one,

Share too His sonship may :

Lord, I would serve and be a son,

Dismiss me not, I pray."

T. T. Lynch.

IV. Seemingly obscure positions in the Divine service are in many instances positions of great importance and responsibility.

It was so in this case. There was danger of attack in the rear. With the exception of the camp of Judah, which led the way, the camp of Dan was in a position which required the greatest strength. And, being numerically inferior only to Judah, the wisdom of its appointment to that position is obvious. Though their position was "hind-

most," yet in importance it was second only to that of the camp of Judah. An illustration of spiritual work. The services of the quiet and comparatively obscure scholar, thinker, and writer are, at the very least, quite as important as those of the popular preacher. The wise and faithful pastor, who is almost unknown beyond his own sphere of service, is doing as worthy and as needful a work as the evangelist whose fame is world-wide. The quiet members of the Church, who are influential in the family and in the prayer meetings, are perhaps more necessary to the existence and prosperity of the Church than the men who are prominent in committees and on public platforms. (c)

Conclusion:

1. *Have we any place in the spiritual Israel?*

2. *Are we endeavouring faithfully to discharge its duties?*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) *The feeblest power may be beneficially exerted.* Are there any who are flattering themselves that if they possessed *gigantic talents* they would employ them on behalf of human freedom and human progress? I pronounce such self-consolation a deadly error. Man's business is to employ the talents with which Almighty Wisdom has endowed him, and by their employment to multiply them. Deposit the acorn in a cabinet, and time will turn it to corruption; but plant that acorn where the light and the dew of heaven can exert upon it their fructifying influence, and time will develop the majestic oak. So with talents; bury them in disuse, and they will become morally pestilential; but give them free and beneficent exercise, and they will breathe new life into the social constitution. Young man! employ thy one talent diligently, and thou shalt be promoted to the rulership of larger empire; wait not for time that may never advene; sigh not for golden opportunities and felicitous coincidences; the true man makes every opportunity golden by turning it to a golden use, and the robust soul conquers the infelicities of unpropitious circumstances. That will be a glorious day in human history on which all Christians, the feeblest and mightiest, will be working for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom;—the orator swaying the multitude, the writer sending forth his richly laden page, the widow giving her two mites, and the child of poverty bestowing "a cup of cold water." *When the whole Church is at work the kingdom of darkness will be shaken to its centre.*—J. Parker, D.D.

(b) Napoleon was the most effective man in modern times—some will say of all times. The secret of his character was, that while his plans were more vast, more various, and, of course, more difficult than those of other men, he had the talent, at the same time, to fill them up with perfect promptness and precision, in every particular of execution. His vast and daring plans would have been visionary in any other man: but with him every vision flew out of his brain a chariot of iron, because it was filled up, in all the particulars of execution, to be a solid and compact framework in every part. His armies were together only one great engine of desolation, of which he was the head or brain. Numbers, spaces, times, were all distinct in his eye. The wheeling of every legion, however remote, was mentally present to him. The tramp of every foot sounded in his ear. The numbers were always supplied, the spaces passed over, the times met, and so the work was done. . . . There must be detail in every great work. It is an element of effectiveness, which no reach of plan, no enthusiasm of purpose, can dispense with. Thus, if a man conceives the idea of becoming eminent in learning, but cannot toil through the million of little drudgeries necessary to carry him on, his learning will be soon told. Or, if a man undertakes to become rich, but despises the small and gradual advances by which wealth is ordinarily accumulated, his expectations will, of course, be the sum of his riches. Accurate and careful detail, the minding of common occasions and small things, combined with general scope and

vigour, is the secret of all the efficiency and success in the world.—II *Bushnell, D. D.*

(c) *Slight services may be invaluable services.* What can be a more trivial image than “a cup of cold water?” Less trivial, unquestionably, in the hot East than in our well-watered England; but a trivial image even there. And yet I have read of cases in which a cup of water would have fetched more than its weight in gold. Look into the despairing eyes of that boat-load of ship-wrecked sailors, tossing hour after hour on the ocean in the heat of the sun: the briny water glancing and flashing all around them as if in mockery, and not a drop anywhere of that which might slake their wild human thirst. What would not those men give for a draught of fresh water a-piece? Look at the caravan in the desert, when the last camel, “the ship of the desert,” lies stranded and doomed upon the sand; when no hope remains to the travellers of reaching in time the spot where the cool palm-trees draw their life from the hidden spring. How much of his rich merchandize would not that dying trader be content to part with in exchange for “a cup of cold water?” Or traverse the battle-field when the fight is ended, and one poor wounded soldier, whose courage had carried him too far has been overlooked. The sun goes down, the stars appear, but dewy night fails to alleviate the burning thirst which always follows gun-shot wounds. Yet

if some comrade shall venture out to look for the wounded man, shall find him groaning under the silent stars, and shall bring him, though it were from the nearest puddle, the draught he craves, they two shall know for ever what a blessing there may be in “a cup of cold water.” And have we not all heard of the generous Sidney, as he was borne dying from the field of Zutphen, how he had just put the cup to his lips, when a poor fellow was carried by, who looked as he went at the richer Sidney’s draught with the longing eyes of despair,—and how the dying rich man withdrew his lips before he drank, and gave the cup to the dying poor man with the words, “Thy necessity is yet greater than mine!” Beside the noble Sidney’s name is that simple story still inscribed upon the immortal page. Of such and of so great a value may even “a cup of cold water” be. And I often think of HIM who sat once by Jacob’s well in the heat of the day, asking for a drink of water from the Samaritan woman. *He* accepted all the conditions of human weakness and human want. *He* knew by experience, even whilst he used this image to indicate the slight nature of such an offering as this, what a precious offering it might really be, and that it might be employed, and that without exaggeration, to denote all the difference between life and death.—*J. G. Pigg, B.A.*

CONTENTMENT AND OBEDIENCE.

(Verses 32-34.)

These verses present to us two topics on which we may reflect with profit.

I. Contentment with the Divine appointment.

We have seen that God in His infinite and sovereign wisdom allotted to each tribe its place and duty as it pleased Him. And it appears from the text that each tribe freely accepted the Divine appointment, and fell into its allotted position. There is not even a hint that any one of the tribes was guilty of any murmuring against the arrangements. This is the more remarkable when we take into account how prone the people were to complain and fret upon the very slightest pretext. Let us learn to be content cheerfully to occupy the position, and diligently to do the work allotted to us by God. “My times are in Thy hand.” “He shall choose our inheritance for us.” “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel.” The most cogent reasons

urge us to be content with the appointments of God concerning us.

1. *We are incompetent to determine our own place and duty.* This will at once appear if we consider—(1). *Our ignorance.* How ignorant we are (a) of *ourselves*. Possibilities of both good and evil are latent within us which only God knows. If the determination of our lot were with us, we might choose such an one as would tend to kill any germs of truth and goodness which are within us, and to stimulate the germs of evil into awfully rapid and ruinous development. God alone is thoroughly acquainted with us. How ignorant we are (b) of the *future*. The particular character and circumstances of the coming minute are veiled from us. The choice which now seems wise and good, amid the altered circumstances and conditions of the morrow, may appear foolish and evil. To God only is the entire future clearly visible. Our

incompetence to determine our own lot will appear further if we consider—(2) *Our proneness to self-indulgence.* In choosing for ourselves, we should select the pleasant rather than the painful, the sweet rather than the bitter. And yet for us the bitter may be the more wholesome, and the painful may be indispensable to our well-being. We are incapable of choosing our own place and work.

2. *We have ample grounds for confidence in the determinations of God for us.* We discover these in—(1) *His knowledge.* He knows all things. He knows the whole future perfectly. He knows us individually and thoroughly (see Ps. cxxxix. 1-4). (2) *His wisdom.* "Wisdom and might are His: He giveth wisdom unto the wise," etc.; "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" etc.; "The only wise God." (3) *His kindness.* He is as gracious as He is wise. "God is love" (see Ps. cxlv. 8, 9). Surely, in considerations like these we have most powerful reasons for contentment with the place and work to which we are appointed by God. (a) These considerations should—

First—*Silence our murmurings because of our particular circumstances and condition.*

Second—*Deter us from seeking to alter our condition and circumstances by any unrighteous or uncorthy methods.* (b)

(a) There are two forms of discontent: one laborious, the other indolent and complaining. We respect the man of laborious desire, but let us not suppose that his restlessness is peace, or his ambition meekness. It is because of the special connection of meekness with contentment that it is promised that the meek shall "inherit the earth." Neither covetous men, nor the grave, can inherit anything; they can but consume. Only contentment can possess. The most helpful and sacred work, therefore, which can at present be done for humanity, is to teach people (chiefly by example, as all best teaching must be done) not how to "better themselves," but how to "satisfy themselves." It is the curse of every evil nation and evil creature to eat, and *not* be satisfied. The words of blessing are, that they shall eat and be satisfied. And as there is only one kind of water which quenches all

II. Obedience to the Divine commands.

The obedience of Israel upon this occasion seems to have been most exemplary, "And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards," etc. Without murmuring or disputing, without abatement or omission, they did as they were directed. Their obedience was prompt and complete. Let us note this to their credit, and as an example to us. Entire obedience is required of us also.

1. *All God's commands are binding, because they are all right.* He requires of us nothing but what is just and true. We cannot break the least of His commandments without sin. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

2. *All God's commands are benevolent.* "In keeping of them there is great reward." Obedience is blessed as well as binding. (c)

Conclusion:

Let us seek Divine aid that we may render full and hearty obedience to all the commands of God.

"O let Thy sacred will

All Thy delight in me fulfil!

Let me not think an action mine own way,

But as Thy love shall sway,

Resigning up the rudder to Thy skill."

Geo. Herbert.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

thirst, so there is only one kind of bread which satisfies all hunger, the bread of justice or righteousness; which hungering after, men shall always be filled, that being the bread of Heaven; but hungering after the bread, or wages, of unrighteousness, shall not be filled, that being the bread of Sodom. And, in order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art and joy of humble life,—this, at present, of all arts or sciences being the one most needing study. Humble life,—that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance; not excluding the idea of foresight, but wholly of fore-sorrow, and taking no troublesome thought of coming days: so, also, not excluding the idea of providence, or provision, but wholly of accumulation; the life of domestic affection and domestic peace, full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind

pleasure;—therefore, chiefly to the loveliness of the natural world.—*J. Ruskin.*

(b) But that Thou art my wisdom, Lord,
And both mine eyes are Thine,
My mind would be extremely stirr'd
For missing my design.

Were it not better to bestow
Some place and power on me?
Then should Thy praises with me grow,
And share in my degree.

But when I thus dispute and grieve,
I do resume my sight;
And pilf'ring what I once did give,
Disseize Thee of Thy right.

How know I, if Thou should'st me raise,
That I should then raise Thee?
Perhaps great places and Thy praise
Do not so well agree.

Wherefore unto my gift I stand;
I will no more advise:
Only do Thou lend me a hand
Since Thou hast both mine eyes.

Geo. Herbert.

(c) That principle to which Polity owes its stability, Life its happiness, Faith its acceptance, and Creation its continuance, is Obedience. . . . How false is the conception, how frantic the pursuit, of that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty! most treacherous, indeed, of all phantoms; for the feeblest ray of reason might surely show us, that not only its attainment, but its being, was impossible. There is no such thing in the universe. There can never be. The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment. . . . If there be any one principle more widely than another confessed by every utterance, or more sternly than another

imprinted on every atom of the visible creation, that principle is not Liberty, but Law.

The enthusiast would reply that by Liberty he meant the Law of Liberty. Then why use the single and misunderstood word? If by liberty you mean chastisement of the passions, discipline of the intellect, subjection of the will; if you mean the fear of inflicting, the shame of committing, a wrong; if you mean respect for all who are in authority, and consideration for all who are in dependence; veneration for the good, mercy to the evil, sympathy to the weak; if you mean watchfulness over all thoughts, temperance in all pleasures, and perseverance in all toils; if you mean, in a word, that Service which is defined in the liturgy of the English Church to be perfect Freedom, why do you name that by the same word by which the luxurious mean licence, and the reckless mean change; by which the rogue means rapine, and the fool equality, by which the proud mean anarchy, and the malignant mean violence? Call it by any name rather than this, but its best and truest is Obedience. Obedience is, indeed, founded on a kind of freedom, else it would become mere subjugation, but that freedom is only granted that obedience may be more perfect; and thus, while a measure of licence is necessary to exhibit the individual energy of things, the fairness and pleasantness and perfection of them all consist in their Restraint. Compare a river that has burst its banks with one that is bound by them, and the clouds that are scattered over the face of the whole heaven, with those that are marshalled into ranks and orders by its winds. So that though restraint, utter and unrelaxing, can never be comely, this is not because it is in itself an evil, but only because, when too great, it overpowers the nature of the thing restrained, and so counteracts the other laws of which that nature is itself composed.—*J. Ruskin.*

CHAPTER III.

Critical Notes. — “Muster of the Tribe of Levi. As Jacob had adopted the two sons of Joseph as his own sons, and thus promoted them to the rank of heads of tribes, the tribe of Levi founded, strictly speaking, the thirteenth tribe of the whole nation, and was excepted from the muster of the twelve tribes who were destined to form the army of Jehovah, because God had chosen it for the service of the sanctuary. Out of this tribe God had not only called Moses to be the deliverer, lawgiver, and leader of His people, but

Moses' brother Aaron, with the sons of the latter, to be the custodians of the sanctuary. And now, lastly, the whole tribe was chosen, in the place of the first-born of all the tribes, to assist the priests in performing the duties of the sanctuary, and was numbered and mustered for this its special calling.”—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 1. *Generations.* “The term ‘generations’ is strictly a technical word (cf. Gen. ii. 4; v. 1, vi. 9, etc.; Ruth iv. 18). It does not point to birth and origin so much as to down-

ward history and development." The "generations" here are not merely the descendants of Moses and Aaron, but of the Levites generally. "Aaron is placed before Moses here" (see at Ex. vi. 26 *sqq.*), "not merely as being the elder of the two, but because his sons received the priesthood, whilst the sons of Moses, on the contrary, were

classed among the rest of the Levitical families" (cf. 1 Chron. xxiii. 14).

Ver. 3. *Whom he consecrated*: lit. as marg., "whose hand he filled," by setting them apart to the office of priests.

Ver. 4. *In the sight of Aaron, their father*—i.e., during his lifetime.

AARON AND HIS SONS: PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

(Verses 1-4.)

In these verses we have—

I. An incidental illustration of the exalted personal character and the Divine mission of Moses.

Aaron was the ancestor of a regular succession of priests. But Moses seeks nothing for himself or for his descendants. He does not use his high position or his great power for the attainment of any selfish end. He "passes by his own family, or immediate descendants; he gave no rank or privilege to them during his life, and left nothing to them at his death. They became incorporated with the Levites, from or amongst whom they are never distinguished." An illustration of the nobility of his character and the utter unselfishness of his aims. Other eminent men seek to advance the interests of their descendants; but it was not so with him. In this we have also a confirmation of the Divinity of his vocation—that he was called of God to his great enterprise. Had it been otherwise, we should have seen him aim at the gratification of avarice, or the acquisition of power, or the attainment of honours for himself and his successors. The disinterestedness of his conduct witnesses to the Divinity of his calling.

II. An intimation that the duties of the ministers of religion demand for their faithful discharge their entire consecration thereto.

It seems to us that the striking expression used in the third verse may fairly be regarded as suggesting this truth, "Whose hands he filled to minister in the priest's office." The apostles soon found this entire conse-

cration of their time and powers to the work to be necessary. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (see Acts vi. 1-4). And St. Paul, in writing to Timothy, says: "Give thyself wholly to them" (see 1 Tim. iv. 13-16, and remarks on this point in our notes on ch. i. 47-54).

III. An example of wicked sons descending from a godly parent.

Aaron, though far from being so great or so holy a man as his brother, was without doubt a good man; yet Nadab, his eldest son, and Abihu, his second son, were consumed by God because of their sin. "Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai." Their sin was that they kindled the incense in their censers with fire not taken from that which burned perpetually on the altar, and probably that they did this while in a state of intoxication (Lev. x. 1-11). *God will be served as He pleases and directs.* There is peril even in the slightest infringement of Divine directions. In sacred services the least deviations from the clearly revealed will of God are displeasing unto Him. For their sin Nadab and Abihu were devoured by "fire from the Lord." They were degenerate and depraved sons of a pious father. Generation is not regeneration. Personal character is not hereditary as personal possessions often are. Our Lord represents one "in hell" and "in torments" as addressing Abraham as "Father," and Abraham in reply addressing him as "Son." The children

of godly parents may at last find their own place in hell. Salvation is not transmissible. It is a personal concern. Repentance, faith, self-consecration, are acts which cannot be done by proxy. The general rule undoubtedly is that the children of pious parents, who have been well and wisely trained by them, will themselves become pious. It is also true that moral tendencies are transmissible from parent to child. Still there are exceptions to this rule. Yet we think if we knew all the particulars of the home-life and the parental training and example, we should find such exceptions to be very rare indeed. Many parents of undoubted piety fail sadly in the training of their children: some through over-severity, others by undue indulgence, etc. Did not Eli fail in this respect? (1 Sam. iii. 13.) Do not the troubles which arose to Jacob by reason of the sins of his sons look like the natural retribution of his own sins, in deceiving his aged father and in wronging his brother? Were not the troubles in the later life of David, because of the wickedness of some of his sons, connected with his own sins? (2 Sam. xii. 10-12.) Let pious parents take heed to themselves and to their duties. (a)

IV. An example of the widest difference of character and destiny in children of the same parents.

While Nadab and Abihu were sadly depraved and suddenly destroyed, their

younger brethren Eleazar and Ithamar faithfully "ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father," and upon his death, Eleazar succeeded him as high priest. The children of the same parents frequently differ widely from each other in features, in disposition, and, as amongst the sons of Aaron, in character. The freedom of the human will to a very great extent explains this. The things which to one man are the very bread of life, another man will pervert into deadly poison. The ministry of the Divine Gospel to some is "the savour of life unto life," to others "the savour of death unto death." (b)

Conclusion:

Our subject utters earnest counsels—

1. *To the children of godly parents.* Trust not in the character and prayers of your parents for salvation. These are of priceless value, yet they will not avail to your salvation apart from your own faith and obedience. (See Ezek. xviii.) (c)

2. *To parents.* Be diligent and faithful in the discharge of your duty to your children. (1) Let your own life be right, and so set them a good example. (d) (2) Give them wise religious instruction and training. (e) (3) Commend them often and earnestly to God in prayer. (f) (4) Afford them encouragement in every manifestation of pious feeling and conduct. (g)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I do not overlook the dreadful possibility, that, in the stress of temptation, and a depraved inclination, the child, even when all this has been done for him, may wander off and be a prodigal. He may viciously disown the covenant made in his behalf. He may plunge into sin, in despite of all. Then his only way back into the Church of Christ must be by conversion, as with the children of unbelievers. All I say is, that such instances ought to be prevented or diminished by wiser and more Christian notions and practices. Let the Christian parents continually speak to the young child of Church privileges, of the joy and the duty of his Christian heritage and home. Let that child have the doctrines and life of Christ faithfully instilled into his soul, by domestic instruction and family prayer. Let him be reminded of his baptismal dedi-

cation, and taught to live worthily of it. No magical, talismanic effect is thus to be wrought upon him, but a perfectly natural and simple one, standing in harmony with all other educational influences, and guaranteed also a peculiar blessing. This Christian child, like others, must have a spiritual nature and life formed upon him, in addition to his natural life. Only, this blessed boon of a new and holy heart steals in upon him gradually, by way of his parents' eyes and voice and prayers, from the very dawn of his consciousness, grows with his growth, hardens with his muscles, expands with his understanding, and matures in him as gently and regularly as any of the growths of the forest or the field; so that there shall be no period in his remembrance, when he was not moving straight on towards a ripe Christian character, and

full communion in the Church. All this I place in contrast with our strange and savage habit of turning off our little ones to feed on the husks and chaff of the senses, till some dreadful wrench of sorrow, after they have grown up, possibly wakens a few of them to conviction, and drives them back, broken-spirited, from the far country where they had wandered, to their Father's house.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

- (b) So from the heights of will
Life's parting stream descends,
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
Each widening torrent bends,
From the same cradle's side,
From the same mother's knee,
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
One to the peaceful sea!

O. W. Holmes.

(c) The child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him and prayers put up for him, may yet prove wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. This wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He is his own destroyer; and his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead that it will aggravate his sin and his condemnation, and will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.—*M. Henry.*

(d) Truth must be lived into meaning before it can be truly known. Examples are the only sufficient commentaries; living epistles the only fit exponents of written epistles. When the truly Christian father and mother teach as being taught of God, when their prayers go into their lives, and their lives into their doctrine; when their goodness melts into the memory, and heaven, too, breathes into the associated thoughts and sentiments, to make a kind of blessed memory for all they teach, then we see the beautiful office they are in fulfilled.—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

(e) There must be regular Biblical teaching. Somewhere and somehow, not by chance, not at interrupted and infrequent seasons, but patiently and humbly, and week by week, that wonderful, most ancient and Eternal Book must be opened before him. Its sublime yet simple truths, plain to the child's under-

standing; its holy personages; its grand Prophets and ardent Apostles; its venerable patriarchs and its inspired children, must all pass, in their robes of light and forms of singular majesty and beauty before him. Its psalms must be sung into his soul. Its beatitudes and commandments must be fixed in his remembrance. Its parables must engage his fancy. Its miracles must awe his wonder. Its cross, and ark, and all its sacred emblems, must people his imagination. Without that Bible, no child born among us can come to Him whom only the Bible reveals.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(f) There must be prayer. Your child must know, he must see, he must feel, that between your parent-heart and Him who is the Infinite Father of all alike there is open and conscious communion. Till there is established, in all simplicity, this confiding and daily intercourse between the soul and Heaven, you have not received your child in the name of Christ. What was testified by one of the strong statesmen of early American history might be declared, in spirit, probably by nearly all the best men that have lived in Christendom. "I believe," he said, "that I should have been swept away by the flood of French infidelity if it had not been for one thing—the remembrance of the time when my sinned mother used to make me kneel by her bedside, taking my little hands folded in hers, and causing me to repeat the Lord's Prayer."—*Ibid.*

(g) Piety is very commonly discouraged in children by giving them tests of character that are inappropriate to their age. The child, for example, loses his temper in some matter in which he is crossed; and the conclusion is forthwith sprung upon him that he has a bad heart, and is certainly no Christian child. It is only necessary to ask how the father, how the mother, would themselves fare tested by the same rule? . . . It is never to be assumed by us that they are without piety because they falter in some things. The child must be judged or tested in the same general way as the adult. If he is wholly perverse, has no spirit of duty, turns away from all religious things, it will not encourage anything good in him to tell him that he is without piety; but if he loves religious things, wants to be in them, tries after a good and obedient life, he is to be shown how tenderly God regards him, how ready He is to forgive him, and when he stumbles or falls, how kindly He will raise him up, how graciously help him to stand!—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

THE DEDICATION OF THE LEVITES—CHURCH WORK AND WORKERS.

(Verses 5-10.)

These verses suggest the following observations:—

I. That the offices of the Church are Divinely instituted.

The Lord here institutes the Levitical order with its duties, the priestly order with its duties, and places both under the high priest, who also had his duties. In the Christian Church the office of the Ministry was instituted by our Lord Himself. (See Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Luke xxiv. 45-49) The deacon's office was instituted by the inspired apostles with solemn prayer to God, and was ratified by the signal blessing of God which followed. (See Acts vi. 1-8) Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are spoken of by St. Paul as the gifts of Christ to the Church, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These offices are not human inventions. They are Divine in their origin, and in their authority. (a)

II. There are different ranks in the offices of the Church as instituted by God.

The Levites were given to the priests for the performance of those religious duties which were of an inferior kind. The priests ranked higher than the Levites. They were granted a nearer access to God in the Holy of holies. The high priest held the highest office in the tribe, and ranked as the head of both the priests and the Levites. With respect to the Levites this is clearly indicated in the text. Thus, in verse 6, "the expression עֲבָדִים is frequently met with in connection with the position of a servant, as standing before his master to receive his commands."—*Keil and Del.* And Fuerst: "To stand before one in a respectful, submissive, ministering position before the great, hence to serve, to wait upon. Deut. i. 38; Dan. i. 5." The ninth verse also expresses their "complete

surrender" to him. We must be careful in applying this to the Christian Church; for, as Dr. Stoughton observes, "the Jewish Church was in certain respects, and those the most characteristic and striking, so utterly different from the Churches instituted by the Apostles, that a combination of the principles of the first, with the principles of the second, is simply impossible." But in the offices of the Christian Church there are grades or ranks. Various ranks are necessary for the maintenance of the order, and the performance of the various duties of the Church. Various ranks are inevitable. While there are differences of mental capacity and spiritual power amongst the members of the Church, differences of rank there must be. Thus we find that ministers were rulers in the Churches in the Apostolic age. St. Paul writes, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you," etc. (1 Thess. v. 12, 13. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God." "They ruled in the name of their Divine Master, administering His laws, not enacting any of their own."

III. The lowliest labour in the service of God is sacred and blessed.

The Levites were to perform the most common and laborious duties. They were the servants of the priests. They had to keep guard round the tabernacle, to keep the sacred vessels pertaining to it, to remove it from place to place during their wanderings and journeyings, to prepare supplies for the sanctuary, such as incense, wine, oil, etc., and to keep all pertaining to the tabernacle clean and in order. Yet they were dedicated to this work, and taught to regard the work itself as sacred. The most menial labour in connection with the cause of God should still be regarded as sacred.

Its high and holy associations and ends exalt and hallow it. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than," etc. Indeed, all work which is faithfully done is sacred. Duty is ever divine and ennobling. "One thing I will remind you of," says Mr. Carlyle, "that the essence and outcome of all religions, creeds, and liturgies whatsoever is, to do one's work in a faithful manner. Unhappy caitiff, what to you is the use of orthodoxy, if with every stroke of your hammer you are breaking all the Ten Commandments,—operating upon Devil's dust, and endeavouring to reap where you have not sown?" (b)

IV. God also appoints the persons to fill the various offices in His Church.

Here He appoints the tribe of Levi to the service of the tabernacle, and the sons of Aaron to the priesthood; and He called Aaron to be the high priest. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." True ministers are creations of God, not the manufacture either of university or college professors, or of consecrating bishops, or of both united. He alone is able to qualify men for the office, and He alone is competent to utter the authoritative call to it. (c)

V. Intrusion into sacred places and

duties awakened the stern displeasure of the Lord.

"Aaron and his sons shall wait on their priest's office; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Any one who was not a son of Aaron, even though he were a Levite, that should draw nigh to perform any of the duties pertaining to the office of the priest was to be put to death. "Let this be thought upon by our over-bold intruders into the work of the ministry." God will have sacred things reverently regarded, and sacred duties reverently performed.

Conclusion :

The subject affords—1. *Encouragement to those who are called of God to Christian work.* He who has called you to your work will sustain you in it, make it efficient by His blessing, and confer upon you rich rewards. 2. *Admonition as to our estimate of the ministers of the Lord.* They "are ambassadors for Christ." God Himself speaks through them to men. They are called and commissioned by Jesus Christ. And He says, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me;" "Despise not prophesyings." "Know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All men cannot work in the same way : "There are diversities of operation." Upon the face of a watch you may see an illustration of my meaning. On that small space you have three workers: there is the *second*-pointer performing rapid revolutions; there is the *minute*-pointer going at a greatly reduced speed; and there is the *hour*-pointer tardier still. Now any one unacquainted with the mechanism of a watch would conclude that the busy little second-pointer was doing all the work—it is clicking away at sixty times the speed of the minute-pointer; and as for the hour-hand that seems to be doing no work at all. You can see in a moment that the first is busy, and in a short time you'll see the second stir, but you must wait still longer to assure yourself of the motion of the third. So is it in the Church. There are active, fussy men who appear to be doing the work of the whole community, and others who go

at less speed, and others slower still. But can we do without the minute and the hour-pointers? The noisy second-hand might go round its little circle for ever, without telling the world the true time. We should be thankful for all kinds of workers. The silent, steady hour-hand need not envy its noisy little colleague. Each man must fill the measure of his capacity. Your business is to do your allotted work, so as to meet the approbation of the Master.—*Jos. Parker, D.D.*

(b) There is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works; in idleness alone is there perpetual despair. . . . It has been written, "an endless significance lies in work"—as man perfects himself by writing. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seed-fields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal, the

man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul, unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these, like hell-dogs, lie beleaguering the soul of the poor day-worker, as of every man; but as he bends himself with free valour against his task, all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labour in him, is it not a purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up? and of sour smoke itself there is made bright, blessed flame! Work is of a religious nature; work is of a brave nature, which it is the aim of all religion to be. . . . Admirable was that of the old monks, "*Laborare est orare*: Work is Worship." All true Work is sacred: in all true Work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness. Labour, wide as the Earth, has its summit in Heaven. Sweat of the brow; and up from that to sweat of the brain, sweat of the heart: which includes all Kepler calculations, Newton meditations, all Sciences, all spoken Epics, all acted Heroisms, Martyrdoms—up to that "Agony of bloody sweat," which all men have called divine! O brother! if this is not "worship," then I say the more pity for wor-

ship, for this is the noblest thing yet discovered under God's sky! Who art thou that complainest of thy life of toil? Complain not. Look up, my wearied brother; see thy fellow-Workmen there, in God's Eternity; surviving there, they alone surviving: sacred band of the Immortals, celestial Body-guard of the Empire of Mankind! Even in the weak Human Memory they survive so long, as saints, as heroes, as gods; they alone surviving; peopling, they alone, the immeasured solitudes of Time! To thee, Heaven, though severe, is *not* unkind; Heaven is kind—as a noble Mother; as that Spartan Mother, saying, while she gave her son his shield, "With it, my son, or upon it!" Thou too shalt return home, in honour to thy far-distant Home, in honour; doubt it not—if in the little thou keep thy shield! Thou, in the Eternities and deepest Death-kingdoms, art not an alien; thou everywhere art a denizen! Complain not; the very Spartans did not complain.—*Thos. Carlyle.*

(c) The man who has adopted the church as a profession, as other men adopt the law, or the army, or the navy, and goes through the routine of its duties with the coldness of a mere official—filled by him, the pulpit seems filled by the ghastly form of a skeleton, that, in its cold and bony fingers, holds a burning lamp.—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

GOD'S CLAIMS UPON MAN'S SERVICE.

(Verses 11-13.)

These verses suggest the following observations:—

I. That God's claims upon man's service are incontestable.

Upon what are they grounded?

1. *Upon what He is in Himself.* "The Levites shall be Mine . . . Mine shall they be. I am the Lord." The concluding words of verse 13 are better thus expressed: "Mine shall they be, Mine, the Lord's." He is the Proprietor of all things. All things and all persons were created by Him, and are sustained by Him. He is over all. He is the greatest, the best Being. And as such His claim upon man is complete and indisputable. The inventor has a right to his invention; the maker to the thing made. So God, etc. The Supremely Great and Good has a right to the admiration, the worship, and the service of all intelligent beings.

2. *Upon what He does for man.* "All the firstborn are mine; for on the

day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel," etc. The preservation of the firstborn of the Israelites on the dread night when all the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain is here put forth by the Lord as a ground of claim upon them. Their preservation was an exercise of the Divine mercy. He spared them that they might devote themselves unreservedly to His service. God spares the sinful race of man, and constantly confers upon the ill-deserving many choice gifts. He has redeemed us at a great cost,—“not with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ.” His claims upon us are not only incontrovertible, but most heart-constraining also. (a)

Such being the character of His claims upon us, we cannot withhold from Him our loyal and hearty service

without incurring the guilt of manifest fraud and basest ingratitude.

II. There is a correspondence between the gifts and the claims of God.

His demands are proportioned to His bestowments. He had spared the lives of the firstborn of Israel, and He claims the firstborn. "Unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." "Freely ye have received, freely give." All our possessions and powers involve corresponding responsibilities. (b)

1. *This is righteous.* No one can truthfully complain that the requirements of God are unreasonable or excessive.

2. *This is beneficent.* By the operation of this principle the weak are aided by the strong, the great and gifted render much and noble service, etc. Let no one boast of the greatness of his powers or possessions, as though they were his own, etc. "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" etc. Let us rather be humble, and faithful in the use of all our gifts in God's service.

III. The Divine arrangements are ever marked by infinite wisdom and kindness.

In the substitution of the tribe of Levi for the firstborn of all the tribes, we have an illustration of this. "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn," etc.

1. By assigning the sacred duties of the service of the tabernacle to the one tribe *they would be likely to be more faithfully and efficiently performed.* The undivided interest of the tribe would be devoted to this holy calling.

2. By this arrangement *the convenience of the nation was undoubtedly consulted.* The Divine requirements in this respect would be the more easily complied with by this arrangement than by that for which it was substituted.

3. *The tribe of Levi was numerically the most fitted for these duties.* "This was the *smallest* tribe, and they were quite enough for the service. To have had a more numerous tribe at this time would have been very inconvenient."

4. *The tribe of Levi had manifested its moral fitness for these duties.* By their faithful and courageous defence of the honour of the Lord, by slaying the worshippers of the golden calf, the children of Levi had shown themselves to be the most suitable of all the tribes for this service. So we are able to trace the wisdom and kindness of God in this arrangement. And all His plans and doings are perfectly wise and kind. We may not always be able to discover this wisdom and kindness. But the limitation of our powers should never be regarded as a reason for questioning the Divine perfections. Let every additional illustration of His wisdom and goodness that we discover lead us to cherish increased gratitude to Him, and to repose increased confidence in Him.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A gentleman, visiting a slave-mart, was deeply moved by the agony of a slave-girl, who had been delicately reared, and feared that she should fall into the hands of a rough master. The gentleman inquired her price, paid it to the slave-trader, then placed the bill of sale in her own hands, telling her she was free, and could now go home. The slave-girl could not realise the change at first, but, running after her redeemer, cried, "He has redeemed me! he has redeemed me! Will you let me be your servant?" How much more should we serve Him who has redeemed us from sin, death, and hell?—*Dict. of Illust.*

(b) Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper, as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, them on thee.
Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do;
Not light them for themselves: for if our
virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely
touch'd,
But to fine issues: nor nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence,
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use.—*Shakespeare.*

"Measure for Measure," i. 1.

The earth that in her genial breast
Makes for the down a kindly nest,
Where wafted by the warm south-west
It floats at pleasure,
Yields, thankful, of her very best,
To nurse her treasure :

True to her trust, tree, herb, or reed,
She renders for each scatter'd seed,
And to her Lord with dutious heed
Gives large increase :
Thus year by year she works unfeigned,
And will not cease,

Woe worth these barren hearts of ours,
Where Thou has set celestial flowers,
And water'd with more balmy showers
Than e'er distill'd
In Eden, on th' ambrosial bowers—
Yet nought we yield,

Largely Thou givest, gracious Lord,
Largely Thy gifts should be restor'd,
Freely Thou givest, and Thy word
Is, "Freely give."
He only, who forgets to hoard,
Has learn'd to live, *Keble.*

THE MEASURE OF THE DIVINE DEMANDS UPON MAN.

(Verses 12, 13.)

In the text God calls attention to the reason he had for selecting a tribe for the service of the sanctuary. It was to be in lieu of the firstborn, who were specially His because He smote the firstborn of Egypt to effect the deliverance of Israel. He had a right to the firstborn in the sense that all are His ; but, in addition to that, they are now His, as redeemed by Him. It is the same with us now. While all things and all men are God's, the Christian is especially His—he is His child. God is said to be the father of us all ; and so He is. But then we have sinned, and have thereby forfeited all our rights. We are the prisoners of Justice. The parent of the criminal cannot exercise his fatherly functions: practically his child has ceased to be his, for the State claims him. So with us and God. Although as Creator He is the Father of us all, yet, through our sin, we are practically not His children. He cannot exercise the paternal functions towards us till we are ransomed from the curse of the law and become free, which we only do in and through Christ. It is then, by redemption, that we become His dear children, and enjoy all the privileges of sonship. Thus Christians, like the firstborn, specially belong to God ; for he has not only given them being, but he has ransomed them.

The text further contains a principle of deep importance to us. As God smote the firstborn of Egypt, He demanded the firstborn of Israel. *The*

measure of their redemption became the measure of His demands from them. He expected them, and He expects us to do in our way what He has done in His way for us. He calls upon us to give to Him what He has given to us. We find the same principle in the New Testament. Christ is more than the sacrifice for sin : He is our Pattern. As He made Himself of no reputation, we are to have the mind that was in Him. We are to crucify self, to die to sin, and to rise again in newness of life.

We shall now take two comprehensive points.

I. God gave the best He had to effect our salvation.

He withheld not His only begotten, His well-beloved Son. A parent's love to his child is the deepest and tenderest. Such was God's love to Christ. The sacrifice was the greatest that the Father could make. We feel sure that if man could have been saved in any other way the Son would have been spared the ignominy, the bitterness, and the pain He endured through His life and in His death. God gave *Him*, the best, the chiefest treasure that He had, for our ransom. In this we have a significant hint of what He expects from us. We must give Him the very best of all we are and of all we have. As there was no salvation without God giving His best for us, so there is no religion unless we are prepared to give our best to Him. There is no hardship in this. It really means no more than

this, that we are to love Him supremely. He asks nothing of us that He has not done for us first Himself. In the life of Christ this is conspicuous. He lived all His sermons. He taught much that was new, that was hard to do, and was against the practice of the world; but He did it all first Himself. God has given us His best in giving His Son; let us then give our best of everything to Him.

II. The Son gave Himself.

On the part of Christ there was the sacrifice of His own life as the ransom for our sin. Redemption is more than doctrine—it is the Son of God giving Himself for man. Just so, religion is more than creed—it is man giving Himself to God. Christ might have given many things; but nothing would do for our salvation but the consecration of Himself. This is the extent of God's demand on us. "My son, give me thine heart." We have to yield ourselves to Him. Not merely to die for Him, but to give up ourselves to live for Him—to burn out in His work—to be faithful unto death—which is often harder to do than to die for Him.

Many are willing to give time, talents, money. But Christ wants us. He knows that if we give Him our heart we shall give Him all; and if we withhold this from Him, we give Him nothing at all. Consecrate yourselves to Him as He did Himself for you. This is the great principle of the text. And it is the principle which governs God's demands of us at the present day. Let us sacrifice ourselves to God as He sacrificed His Son for us. I urge this because—

1. *Thus only can we attain to a high ideal in religion.* Be the best possible Christian: be not content with mediocrity: aim high.

2. *This is the best way to be useful.* The power of Christianity is in the fact of Christ giving Himself. Our influence for good is in proportion to our self-sacrifice.

3. *This is the way to enjoy religion.* The more we give of self to God, the more will He give of Himself to us.

Let all think of what God has done for them, and consider what returns they have made to Him.

David Lloyd.

THE NUMBERING OF THE LEVITES: COMMAND AND OBEDIENCE.

(Verses 14-16.)

In these verses we have the command of the Lord to Moses to number the Levites, and the record of the obedience of Moses. In dealing with the command we shall notice only such suggestions as arise out of that part of it in which it differs most from the command to number the other tribes. In the other tribes "every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war" were numbered. But concerning the tribe of Levi, Moses is directed to number "every male from a month old and upward." This command is suggestive of—

I. The interest of God in childhood.

The tribe of Levi was not appointed to the same service as the other tribes; and, consequently, they are not numbered by the same rule. "Number the

children of Levi,—every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them." The Levites "were to be sanctified to Jehovah in the place of the firstborn; and it was at the age of a month that the latter were either to be given up or redeemed" (compare verses 40 and 43 with chap. xviii. 16). The children of the Levites were to be taught that from their infancy they belonged to the Lord, and were dedicated to His service. Only 8,580 out of 22,000 were regarded as fit to be employed in the service of the tabernacle, yet all were numbered as belonging to the Lord. God is profoundly and tenderly interested in childhood. In His spiritual Kingdom, in which all His loyal subjects are priests, He claims for His service every child even from the very dawn of its existence. His

interest in little children is strikingly illustrated in the presentation of the little child by the Lord to His disciples as the picture of the "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 1-6.) And perhaps even more strikingly in the blessing which He bestowed upon the infants that were brought to Him for that purpose. (Matt. xix. 13-15.) It is the duty of Christian parents to recognise God's claim upon their offspring, and to dedicate them to Him. That dedication cannot take place too early, since from their very birth they are His by the divinest rights. It is also their duty to train their children for Him. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Let parents be encouraged in the performance of their duty by the interest of God in their offspring. He will approve and bless their devout efforts. (a)

The command here given to Moses suggests,—

II. The generosity of God's dealings with man.

He here accepts even infants, who must live many years before they can actively engage in His service, in exchange for able-bodied men. "Observe we again with comfort," saith Bishop Babington, "what exchanges God maketh with men. He taketh a child of a month old, and foregoeth a first-born of ripe years. Such is His manner and most gracious goodness; He giveth more than He wanteth, and gainers ever are His children by Him. Job had a bitter trial and a heavy loss, yet mark the end, and the Lord made him greater than ever he was—the Lord blessing the last days of Job, as the text saith, more than the first, etc. David's child was taken away, but a far better was given again, even Solomon, the wisest son that ever father had. A cake was taken of the poor widow of Sarepta for His prophet, but what a requital made God unto her? The meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse decayed not till other comfort

grew. Another kindness done by the Shunamite, was it not recompensed by that blessing that was so vehemently wished—even a son; first given, and after revived from death to life again? Think of the saying in the Gospel concerning this point: 'Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath forsaken house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now at this present, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting.' See the change, and mark the gain for your exceeding comfort. Such a God is our God, that not a cup of cold water can be given, but He will yield a far greater gift for it. We cannot visit Him, feed Him, clothe Him, etc., in His poor members, but He will acknowledge it before the host of heaven, and give that which passeth ten thousand worlds—eternal joy in heaven."

Let us notice,—

III. The obedience of God's servant.

"And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded." The point to which prominence is here given is the completeness of the obedience. It was not merely general, but particular. He conformed to the directions which he had received from the Lord in detail. Herein he is an example to us. Nothing which God directs can be trifling or unimportant. What Infinite Wisdom commands minutely, it must be both our duty and our interest minutely to do. "General obedience," says Dr. Parker, "is only so far good: we must be minute and exhaustive, or we shall incur Divine displeasure. Learn that *Divine language never exceeds Divine meaning*. There is significance in every word; you cannot amputate a single syllable without doing violence to the Divine idea." Let us strive to render complete and hearty obedience to all the commands of God. (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) God's interest in human life begins at the earliest possible period. This is an argument for infant baptism which I have never known to be touched, much less shaken. The narrow critics who have taken upon themselves to settle that question, have been fighting each other with Greek derivatives and grammatical inflexions, as if *any* moral question could be settled by such means! I make this question one of *life*, not one of grammar; and I put this direct and urgent inquiry—namely, When does God's interest in human life *begin*? When does Christ's heart begin to yearn in pity over all human creatures? When does compassion's tear well into the Redeemer's eyes?

When does He feel the kindling of love towards human beings? Is it when they are five years old, or ten—does He shut up His love until they are twenty-one? The question may appear quaint, but I press it; I urge a distinct answer—When does Christ's interest in human life begin? I contend that His interest relates to life, not to age; to birth, not to birth-days. As soon as a child is born, that great redeeming heart yearns with pitying love. What has Christ to do with what we call *age*? What is *age*? It may be useful for us to keep a record of anniversaries, to tabulate for statistical purposes, to call one man twenty and another forty, though forty, in reality, may be less than twenty; but will you presume to reduce Christ to a commercial agent, who deals with men according to their age? No! I hold it as a sweet joy, a most delicious and enrapturing thought, that Jesus Christ interests Himself in me, that my name was written in His heart ere it fell from my mother's lips, and that before a father knows the mystery and pride of parental life, Jesus ex-

periences the travail of the soul which yearns to make the child an heir of immortality.—*Jos. Parker, D.D.*

(b) Nothing is more certain or clear than that human souls are made for law, and so for the abode of God. Without law therefore, without God, they must even freeze and die. Hence even Christ Himself must needs establish and sanctify the law; for the deliverance and liberty He comes to bring are still to be sought only in obedience. Henceforth duty is the brother of liberty, and both rejoice in the common motherhood of law. And just here, my friends, is the secret of a great part of your misery and of the darkness that envelopes your life. Without obligation you have no light, save what little may prick through your eyelids. Only he that keeps God's commandments walks in the light. The moment you can make a very simple discovery, viz., that obligation to God is your privilege, and is not imposed as a burden, your experience will teach you many things—that duty is liberty, that repentance is a release from sorrow, that sacrifice is gain, that humility is dignity, that the truth from which you hide is a healing element that bathes your disordered life, and that even the penalties and terrors of God are the artillery only of protection to His realm.—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

It ought to be the great care of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must, in a course of obedience to God's will, and service to His honour, follow Him universally, without dividing; uprightly, without dissembling; cheerfully, without disputing; and constantly, without declining: and this is following Him fully.—*M. Henry.*

SACRED THINGS AND DUTIES.

(Verses 17–39.)

Critical Notes.

Verse 36. *The custody and charge.* Margin: "Hebrew, the office of the charge."

Verse 38. *Keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel*, "i.e., to attend to everything that was binding upon the children of Israel in relation to the care of the sanctuary, as no stranger was allowed to approach it on pain of death."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 39. The number of the Levites as stated in this verse is 22,000; but as stated in verses 22, 28, and 34, it is 22,300. Various attempts have been made to reconcile the two. That of

Dr. Kennicott, given by Dr. A. Clarke, *in loco*, seems to us the most reasonable. "Formerly, the numbers of the Hebrew Bible were expressed by *letters*, and not by *words of full length*; and if two nearly similar letters were mistaken for each other, many errors in the number must be the consequence. Now it is probable that an error has crept into the number of the Gershonites, verse 22, where instead of 7,500 we should read 7,200 as *7 caph*, 500, might have been easily mistaken for *7 reth*, 200, especially if the down stroke of the *caph* had been a little shorter than ordinary, which is often the case in MSS." Keil and Del. regard the discrepancy

as arising from "a copyist's error in the number of one of the Levitical families; possibly in verse 28 we should read שְׁלִישִׁי for שְׁנִי (8,300 for 8,600)."

In these verses we have the record of the numbering of the Levites, with the names of the chiefs who had the oversight of them, the places assigned to them about the tabernacle, and the duties as distributed amongst them. They suggest the following *homiletic points*. Notice—

I. The Divine directions for insuring order.

By Divine direction the whole tribe is arranged in four divisions, the families composing each division are clearly distinguished, the station of each division is appointed, a chief is set over each division, and Eleazar the son of Aaron is appointed chief over the chiefs. In this we clearly discover a Divine recognition of—

1. *The importance of arrangement and order.* (See our notes and illustration on chap. ii., verses 1 and 2, on this point.)

2. *The importance of supervision and authority for the maintenance of order.* (On this point see our notes and illustrations on *Society's need of leaders*, ch. i. 4-16.)

II. The Divine distribution of duty.

1. *The duties were distributed amongst the whole.* No family was exempted; nor was any individual of the prescribed age, etc. There was work for all, and for every one. So in our day there is most urgent need for the services of every true man and woman. The greatest need of both the Church and the world is true-hearted labourers.

"There's something for us all to do

In this great world of ours;

There's work for me; there's work for you,

Heaven sends no idle hours:

We have a mission to perform,

A post of trust to fill,

Then rouse the soul, and nerve the arm,

And lend the lofty will." (a)

2. *The duties distributed to each division were different from those distributed to the other divisions.* Moses, and Aaron and his sons, were appointed to the position of the highest honour and the weightiest responsibility. The duties which rank

second in honour were allotted to the Kohathites. To the Merarites, which, though the smallest of the families of Levi, yet contained the largest number of able-bodied men (compare vers. 22, 28, 34, and ch. iv. vers. 36, 40, 44), were allotted the most heavy and laborious duties. All men cannot work at the same tasks or in the same way. Division of duty is (1) *necessary*, because of the differences in the kind and degree of ability amongst men. (b) It is also (2) *advantageous*. By means of it more work may be accomplished and better. The advantage will be found both in the quantity and in the quality of the results. Contrast the ancient and the modern method of pin manufacture in illustration of this point.

3. *The duties of all were Divine.* All were engaged in the service of God; all were appointed by God. The duties were assigned to each division and to all as a "charge" from God—a sacred trust. So now, all duty, even the lowliest and most menial, when rightly regarded and faithfully discharged, is holy. The highest duties can never of themselves exalt the hireling or the unfaithful worker; but the spirit of the faithful and devoted worker will dignify and hallow the meanest labours. (c)

III. The Divine recognition of the sacredness of things associated with religious worship.

Not only the ark and the altars, but the hangings, the coverings, the cords, the boards, the bars, the sockets, the pins, etc., connected with the tabernacle were given in solemn charge to the Levites. All these things were to be held as sacred. And if any stranger came nigh to the sanctuary itself he was to be put to death. And still there are sacred places and sacred things. They have been made sacred neither by the "consecration" of pope or cardinal, of archbishop or bishop, nor by the "dedication" of any minister or ministers; but by the memories which gather round them, or by the uses to which they are set apart. To reverent spirits the commonest things are hallowed by sacred uses, and even the plainest places are consecrated by pure and pre-

cious associations. The spiritual history of every godly man has its sacred places. And have we not each things which are profoundly bound to us personally? (d)

Conclusion :

Let us endeavour to be true and tender in sentiment, pure and reverent in feeling, and hearty and faithful in duty.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is something for all to do, but by different instruments—one by his organ, another by his piano, another by his paint-brush, another by his sculptor's chisel, another by his plough, another by his carpenter's tools, another by his trowel—every man by that to which he is called in the providence of God, that he may give some expression to the inwardness that is waked up in him. There are rude workmen who have, back of their hand, back of their skill, a soul that is trying to express itself in the realities of life. This is the ordination which makes true manhood and true genius.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) See the illustration on verses 5-10, by Dr. Parker.

(c) Teach me, my God and King,

In all things Thee to see,

And what I do in any thing,

To do it as for Thee :

Not rudely, as a beast,

To run into an action;

But still to make Thee preposset,

And give it his perfection.

A man that looks on glass,

On it may stay his eye;

Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,

And then the heav'n espie.

All may of Thee partake:

Nothing can be so mean,

Which with his tincture (for Thy sake)

Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause

Makes drudgery divine :

Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,

Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone

That turneth all to gold :

For that which God doth touch and own

Cannot for less be told.

George Herbert.

See also the illustration by Carlyle given under verses 5-10.

(d) It is given us to transfer our own mental

and moral nature to the objects of our sight or of our conception. One man, who has never read the Sacred History, and whose mind is wholly uninformed as to its wonderful facts, might visit the Holy Land and make himself familiar with its existing scenery, and as his foot impressed its hallowed soil, and his eye rested on its mountains and its vales, on its rivers and its lakes, and on all its natural phenomena, he might betray no more emotion than would be awakened by the contemplation of similar phenomena in any other part of the world; while another man, who had imbibed the spirit and the inspiration of the Bible, and whose faith reposed in its simple, yet sublime narratives, would everywhere find the most extraordinary appearances, and feel that he was in a land teeming with miracles. To him, "every name commemorates a mystery—every grotto announces a prediction—every hill echoes the accent of a prophet." He cannot get away from the impression that "God Himself has spoken in those regions—dried up rivers—rent the rocks—and opened the graves." To him "the desert still appears mute with terror;" and he imagines that it can never have "presumed to interrupt the silence, since it heard the awful voice of the Eternal!" He feels that he is on holy ground; and his very step is reverent. He approaches every object with deepening awe, and like Moses at the burning-bush, sees everything glowing with Divine glory. The natural scenery of Palestine may not be superior to that which is to be found in other parts of the world; but where can we find a country so rich in associations, or with what other place can we connect associations so hallowed and so unique! It is our remembrances and our memories which give to the outward phenomena such transcendent interest. We throw the whole living flame of our holiest feeling upon everything without us and around us, and everywhere we see beauty, and magnificence and glory—everywhere we trace the footsteps of Divinity, and everywhere we hear the voice of God.—*R. Ferguson, L.L.D.*

ALLOTTED DUTIES.

(Verses 21-38.)

I. They differed in importance, yet there was no vain ambition.

II. They differed in labour, yet there was no complaining.

III. They differed in nature, yet were all undertaken with equal cheerfulness.

IV. They differed according to the wise will of God.—*The Biblical Museum.*

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH AND THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

(Verses 25, 26, 31, 36, 37.)

Having chosen the Levites for His service, God portions out their work to them. The priesthood was conferred upon Aaron and his family, and the rest of the tribe were to assist them in the service of the tabernacle. In making these arrangements the character of Moses stands out strikingly prominent. He does not demur because his tribe has no inheritance, neither do we find him seeking any special honour for his own family. Few men there are who are not injured by prosperity and power, and who take no advantage of their position to further the interests of their families. Nepotism is common in Church and State. Moses was above that, and was ready to acquiesce in God's way, thinking it great honour to his family to be engaged in His service, though in the humble position of Levites.

God divides the tribe of Levi, having selected from it the family of Aaron for the priesthood, into three distinct families; and, in the text, He gives to each his own work to do in connection with the tabernacle. Their duty in the wilderness was to carry it and its furniture from place to place, etc. Each had his work to do, and all had to co-operate. Thus the tabernacle and its services were ever attended to, and God's work among the people was constantly carried on. Looking thus at the verses which constitute our text, they suggest to us the subject of *personal responsibility and co-operation in the service of God.*

I. God has a work for every one of His children to do, and He expects each one to do it.

He holds each responsible for it. We are to be His servants; we are to be useful. He brings up none of His children in luxurious idleness. God hates idleness. Amongst the countless forms and varieties of life in the universe, there is not one that has not some

purpose to answer—something given it to do by its Creator. To show how He hates idleness He has linked poverty to it. It is so in religion too. The spiritual idler is ever a spiritual pauper, and can never possess the riches of religion. We must work before we can possess them. The hand of the diligent God blesses. There is much need of calling attention to this truth at the present day. The age is a luxurious one; ease and comfort seem to be the ends of life. This spirit is creeping into our churches. It is difficult to get people to realize their responsibility, and to work for God. They gauge everything by the amount of pleasure it gives, and not by the good it is calculated to do them. *Men* ought to have a higher ideal. God saves us that we might be His fellow-workers. God makes us soldiers before He makes us saints. The highest test of religion is not enjoyment, but usefulness. There is joy in religion. It is the most joyous thing in the world; but then the joy is associated with work. There is no real pleasure in idleness. It is the working man, and not the skulking idler, that has the most physical enjoyment. So in spiritual things. There is no luxury like that of doing good. If any Christian lacks joy in religion, let him work more for God. He expects us all to be workers. None are exempt. There is not one without a "talent;" and God expects it with usury. He exempts none on the ground of youth or age, of inability or weakness, etc. If you are poor, you can show how religion can support in poverty. If you are old, you can "bring forth fruit in old age." Sometimes a Christian is laid by through affliction, and feels that he is of no use whatever. But the sick bed of a child of God is of great profit to the world and to the Church by showing how religion can support the mind and comfort the heart in trial. Moreover,

the afflicted Christian can benefit others by intercession with God. We all know how the suffering child prevails with his parent, and none can tell what the world and the Church owe to the prayers of God's suffering children. All can do something for God. He has given it them to do, and He holds them responsible for it.

II. Not only does God expect each one to work for Him, but He expects all to co-operate in His service.

Each Levite had his own work to perform, but the three divisions were to move together and to halt together. Without their co-operation the tabernacle could not have been erected, and God would not have appeared on the Mercy-seat. We are not to be isolated workers, but fellow-labourers. While it is true that each one is accountable only for himself, it is also true that no one liveth to himself. If we are units, we are parts of a whole. Paul takes the different parts of the human body as an illustration of the body of Christ,

which is the Church. Co-operation is the secret of success. The Church and the Sunday-school, the pulpit and the pew, each must do its own work, and all must work together, if the work of God is to prosper amongst us. It ought to be so between various Churches—the different sections of the one Church of the living God. The work of God suffers for the want of co-operation. Often jealousy and rivalry creep in amongst us; we watch one another instead of our common foe, and prosperity becomes impossible. Are we not all soldiers of the same Christ? Different regiments in one and the same army? The dress may differ, but we all bear the coat-of-arms of our King. Surely, then, there ought to be no jealousy amongst us, and we ought to band together to fight against His enemies. The Church of God must come closer together, and co-operate more heartily, before the world is won for Christ. No opposition can stand before the united Church of God.—*David Lloyd.*

THE COMPLETENESS OF GOD'S CLAIMS, AND THE DIGNITY OF HIS SERVICE.

(Verses 40-51.)

In this section of the history we have the account of the numbering of the firstborn males throughout the twelve tribes in order to effect the exchange of the Levites for them, which God had commanded. Three enquiries claim our attention.

1. *How are we to account for so large a number of firstborn in so short a time?* The command for the sanctification of the firstborn, recorded in Exod. xiii. 1, 2, was not retrospective, but was meant to apply to all that should be born from that time forward. "Hence the difficulty is to explain how the first-born sons, amongst two millions of persons in a single year, could have been so many as is stated in the text; and it must be admitted, notwithstanding the well-known and often remarkable fluctuations in statistics of this sort, that some unusual causes must have been concerned. Such, not to mention the

Divine Blessing, may be found in the sudden development of national energies which would immediately ensue on the exodus. Before that event, the miserable estate of the people, and especially the inhuman order for the destruction of their first-born, would check very seriously the ratio of marriages and births; and this ratio would naturally, when the check was removed, exhibit a sudden and striking increase."—*Speaker's Comm.* As additional arguments, the great fruitfulness of the Israelitish women, and the fact that amongst them the proportion of male births is unusually large, are adduced. (See Keil and Del. *in loco*.)

2. *What is the value of "the shekel of the sanctuary?"* "Here the shekel is evidently a weight, and of a special system of which the standard examples were probably kept by the priests." At this time silver, and not gold, was used

as the standard of value. It is impossible to determine exactly what was the value of the "sacred shekel" as compared with our English money of to-day, but probably it would be about two shillings and sixpence.

3. *Who paid the redemption money for the 273 firstborn who were in excess of the number of the Levites?* "The redemption money," says *The Speaker's Comm.*, "would perhaps be exacted from the parents of the youngest children of the 22,273, they being in the case most nearly approaching that of those who would pay the tax for the redemption of the first-born in future." But the opinion of Attersoll, A. Clarke, and others, seems to us the most probable. Was the money paid "by the firstborn that were last numbered, or by the people?" I answer," says Attersoll, "by the people, to Moses, for the priests: for so doth common equity require, that one might not be eased, and another burdened. But if these first-born had borne the burden, and others been freed from the payment of this sum appointed and enjoined, there had been no equity nor equality observed, which the dignity of holy things seemeth to require."

The command for substituting the Levites for the firstborn (vers. 11-13) we have already considered, and endeavoured to show the reason of the substitution. In considering this portion of the history we confine our attention to two main homiletic points. Notice,—

I. The completeness of God's claims.

We see this here in two things:

1. *He claims not only the firstborn of Israel, but also the firstlings of their cattle.* (See verses 41 and 45.) All were His by right of creation. "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Moreover, the cattle of Israel were spared on that night when "all the firstborn of cattle" belonging to the Egyptians were slain. So that His claim upon the firstborn of cattle, both as having created and as having spared them, rested on the same ground as His claim upon the firstborn sons. (See our notes on vers. 11-13.) "The

cattle of the Levites were doubtless taken in the gross as an equivalent for the firstborn cattle of the other tribes, which of course, no less than the firstborn of men, belonged to the Lord; and in future would have to be redeemed." (See Exod. xiii. 11-15; Num. xviii. 15; Deut. xv. 19.)

God claims ours as well as us; what we have as well as what we are; first ourselves, then our possessions. (Comp. Matt. x. 37-39, xix. 21-24.) When we have truly given ourselves to the Lord we shall withhold nothing else from Him. And apart from this self-consecration to Him, the consecration of even our most costly and treasured possessions is not acceptable to Him. Without our supreme love all other gifts are worthless in His sight. (Comp. Ps. l. 7-14, and Isa. i. 11-14.)

2. *He claims that the 273 firstborn in excess of the Levites shall be redeemed by money.* He does not accept the Levites as a whole for the firstborn as a whole, taking no account of their relative numbers. The Levites must be numbered, and the firstborn must be numbered, and as there is an excess in the number of the firstborn, every one of these must be redeemed. Every one is His; and He is not willing to lose any one. May we not regard this as exhibiting His high estimate of men? We are so precious in His sight that He will not lose one of us if He can prevent it. His heart yearns in unutterable love towards every prodigal wanderer from His service, His home, and His heart. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you. . . . How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from Me." "When Israel was a child, then I loved him," etc. "How shall I give thee up Ephraim?" etc. God is so exact in His claims upon us, because His love toward us is so great. His demands are always characterised by (1) *generosity*. We have seen (in considering verses 11-13) that the substitution of the Levites was for the advantage of the

people. All His requirements are unspeakably kind in their intention, and beneficent in their operation. (2) *Exactness*. There is no exaggeration in His claims, nor anything unreasonable. He means what He says. He really requires what He demands. He claims from us the unreserved consecration of ourselves and our possessions,—that all shall be used in accordance with His will, etc. Have we duly considered His claims? Are we complying with them? “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present,” etc. Rom. xii. 1.

II. The dignity of God's service.

It was instead of the firstborn that the tribe of Levi was chosen for the service of the tabernacle, or the ministry of religion. Now amongst the Jews the firstborn son ranked higher than the other members of the family, and enjoyed special privileges and honours. He received a double portion of the estate; he exercised an authority over the younger members of the family similar to that of a father; and he was the priest of the entire family. “The birth-right of Esau and of Reuben, set aside by authority or forfeited by misconduct, prove a general privilege as well as quasi-sacredness of primogeniture (Gen. xxv. 23, 31, 34; xlix. 3; 1 Chron. v. 1; Heb. xii. 16), and a precedence which obviously existed, and is alluded to in several passages (as Psa. lxxxix. 27; Job xviii. 13; Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15; Heb. xii. 23).” Now inasmuch as the religious functions of the firstborn were given to the Levites, is not the inference warranted that their service as the ministers of religion was especially honourable? This is true of the Christian minister, because of—

1. *The position which He occupies*. He is the messenger of God to men. He stands before man instead of Jesus Christ. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us; we pray you in Christ's stead,” etc. “Verily, verily,” said our Lord, “He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me.”

2. *The Work in which he is engaged*.

It is his business to expound and illustrate the saving truth of God, and to apply that truth to the souls of men with their many and deep needs; to lead men in their approaches to the throne of the Highest in public worship; and by every possible means to promote the divine culture of human spirits. There can be no work more responsible and honourable than this.

3. *The object for which he labours*. The grand aim of the Christian ministry is the salvation of the souls of men. How transcendently great and important is this aim! (1) Think of the *soul*—its powers, preciousness, etc. How great are its possibilities of progress, usefulness, enjoyment; or of degradation, mischief, misery! Unlimited are the possibilities of every human soul. Consider the Divine estimate of it. We see this in the stupendous price paid for its redemption. “He gave His only begotten Son,” etc. “Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ,” etc. We see the Divine estimate of its worth also in the means and agencies which God employs for its salvation. (2) Think what its *salvation* means. Not merely deliverance from punishment, etc. But restoration to the Divine image. “To be conformed to the image of his Son,” etc. “That ye might be partakers of the Divine nature,” etc. How grand then is the object of the Christian ministry! And how exalted the honour of those who are called to its sacred services!

A service so important and honourable:

First: *Demands for its faithful discharge, great gifts, great godliness, and great devotion.* (a)

Second: *Should be highly esteemed by men and especially by Christians.* To this high and holy service let Christian parents consecrate with gladness their best and most gifted sons. Let Christian young men not shrink from it by reason of any of the sacrifices which it involves; but if called thereto, count it the highest honour, etc. (b) Let all esteem the true minister of Christ highly because of the work in which he is engaged, and the Divine Being whom he represents. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Our work is not lightened by the extraordinary development of education and literature within the last few years, nor by the certainty that it will take huge strides in advance before you have reached middle life. In a few years every village will swarm with men and women who will have gone through, in one form or another, more mental training and competitive examination in some departments of literature, science, or art, than was the lot of four-fifths of the professional men of half a century ago. Those who have nothing to say, and who obviously have no mental culture, will soon be scoffed out of the position of public teachers in every department. The love of luxury, the passion for the sensuous and the comfortable, the desire for amusement, for strong sensation, for pleasing *spectacle*, for fresh effects, which have impregnated every department of modern life and duty, have entered into the house of God, so that all the wisdom of the serpent must be joined with the harmlessness of the dove to do successful battle with the spirit of the world within the sanctuary of God. The beautiful building, the well-trained choir, the comfortable pew, the gorgeous effect, have not infrequently been the ghastly sepulchre of a dead church. Unchrist-like passions are not charmed by sweet music, nor subtle speculation; nor are unspiritual men sanctified by sentimental eloquence, or moral essays, or stained windows. And believe me the great tide of human suffering and wrong doing, of hopeless toil, of grievous sickness and poverty, of boundless avarice and greed, is hardly touched by all the work of all our preachers, teachers, and philanthropists of every school. The knell is always ringing, and the spirits of men are always passing away in dread procession to the silent land . . . It appears to me that another great desideratum is what some might call enthusiasm; some, intensity of conviction; some would call it life. I prefer to speak of it as *reality*. My brethren, the one thing we want is absorbing realisation of the end of preaching; such a treatment of truth, and such a dealing with souls, that those who hear must at least know that the preacher believes what he says, and is putting forth every available power to make others see it with his eyes. If men speak of the Father God, it should be because they know what it is to be His child, and have found peace in His house, and have laid their head on His bosom. If they dare to lift the veil of the supernatural darkness which shrouds Gethsemane and Calvary, will it not be with sore amazed and eyes filled with tears? Yet is this the tone of our ordinary preaching?—*H. R. Reynolds D.D.* From an Address to Students for the Ministry.

(b) Gentlemen, yours is a noble vocation. To be the ally of Christ in His great endeavour to save the world,—with Him to assert the authority of the throne and law of God; with Him to support human weakness in its vacillating endeavours to do the Divine will; to inspire the sinful with trust in the Divine mercy; to console sorrow; to awaken in the hearts of the poor, the weak, the desolate, the consciousness of their relations to the Infinite and Eternal God; to exalt and dignify the lives of old men and maidens, young men and children, by revealing to them things unseen and eternal which surround them now, and the mysterious, awful, glorious life which lies beyond death—this is a great work. There is nothing on earth comparable to it.—*R. W. Dale, D.D.*

(c) As Paul shows the Thessalonians how the preachers of the Word should be honoured, so he teaches the Philippians how to honour their teacher, saying:—"Receive him in the Lord with great gladness, and make much of such" (ii. 29); that is, show yourselves glad of him, that he may be glad of you. Have you any need to be taught why Paul would have you make much of such? Because they are like lamps which consume themselves to give light to others; so they consume themselves to give light to you. Because they are like a hen which clucks her chickens together from the kyte; so they cluck you together from the serpent. Because they are like the great shouts which beat down the walls of Jericho; so they beat down the walls of sin. Because they are like the fiery pillar which went before the Israelites to the Land of Promise, so they go before you to the Land of Promise. Because they are like good Andrew, who called his brother to see the Messiah; so they call you to see the Messiah; and therefore make much of such.—*Henry Smith.* He's Christ's ambassador that man of God, Steward of God's own mysteries! From on high

His warrant is: his charge, aloud to cry,
And spread his Master's attributes abroad,
His works, His ark of mercy, and His rod
Of justice: *his* to sinners to supply
The means of grace, and point how they
may fly
Hell-flames, and how Heaven's pathway must
be trod.
Hold him in honour on his works' account,
And on his Master's! Though a man he be,
And with his flock partake corruption's fount,
Holy and reverend is his ministry:
And, hark! a voice sounds from the heavenly
mount,
"He that despiseth *you*, despiseth ME!"
Bishop Mant.

CHAPTER IV.

Critical Notes.—Ver. 3. **סָבֵר**, *host*, "signifies military service, and is used here with special reference to the service of the Levites as the *militia sacra* of Jehovah."—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 4. "Omit the word *about*, which is unnecessarily supplied. The sense is, 'this is the charge of the sons of Kohath, the most holy things:' *i.e.*, the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Shewbread, the Candlestick, and the Golden Altar, as appears from the verses following, together with the furniture pertaining thereto."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Ver. 6. *Put in the staves.* "Rather probably, 'put the staves thereof in order.' These were never taken out of the golden rings by which the Ark was to be borne (see *Exod. xxv. 14, 15*), but would need adjustment after the process described in *vers. 5 and 6*, which would be likely to disturb them."—*Ibid.*

Vers. 10 and 12. **הַכֹּטֶט**, *a bar*, a bearing frame, or as in *ch. xiii. 23*, a pole for bearing on the shoulder.

Ver. 20. *When the holy things are*

covered. "Literally, **כִּבְלָע** *Keballa*, when they are *swallowed down*; which shows the promptitude with which everything belonging to the holy of holies was put out of sight, for these mysteries must ever be treated with the deepest reverence."—*A. Clarke.* "Render: *to see the holy things for an instant.* The expression means literally, 'as a gulp,' *i.e.*, for the instant it takes to swallow."—*Speaker's Comm.*

The numbering in this chapter differs from that recorded in the preceding chapter. In that every male from a month old and upward of the tribe of Levi was numbered, in order that they might take the place of the firstborn of all the tribes. In this only those who were fitted by their age for the service of the tabernacle, "from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old," were numbered for that service.

The first main division of this chapter (*vers. 1-20*) we shall take as suggesting for homiletic treatment the following subject:—

ASPECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(*Verses 1-20.*)

Looking at these verses in this light, the following points are suggested. The Christian ministry is,—

I. An arduous service.

The Levites were here numbered "from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation." The men selected for service were in the full maturity of their physical powers. Such men were needed, for the labour of the Levites was very severe during the journeyings of the Israelites. "When we consider," says *A. Clarke*, "that there was not less than 10 tons 13 cwt. 24 lbs. 14 oz., *i.e.*, almost ten tons and fourteen hundred pounds' weight of metal employed in the taber-

nacle, besides the immense weight of the skins, hangings, cords, boards, and posts, we shall find it was no very easy matter to transport this moveable temple from place to place." "The work of the ministry," says *Trapp*, "is not an idle man's occupation, but a labouring even to lassitude; compared therefore to harvest work, and to that of cleaving wood, digging in mine-pits, rowing with oars, etc. All the comfort is, that God that helped the Levites to bear the Ark of the Covenant (1 *Chron. xv. 26*), will not be wanting to His weak, but willing servants, 'that labour in the Word and doctrine' (1 *Tim. v. 17*)."

II. A Holy Warfare.

The service of the Levites is regarded in this aspect in the third verse, where all who engage in it are said to "enter into the host." This is expressed more fully and clearly in verse 23: "all that enter in to perform the service." Margin: "to war the warfare." Fuerst: "to do military service." In the New Testament the ministry of the Word is called a warfare, and faithful ministers of the Gospel good soldiers of Christ, and their doctrines weapons of war. Compare 2 Cor. x. 3, 4; 1 Tim. i. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 3; iv. 7. "Every faithful minister," says Burkitt, "is a spiritual soldier, warring under Jesus Christ, his captain and chief commander: must the soldier be called and do all by commission? So must the minister. Must the soldier be armed, trained up, and disciplined, and made fit for service? So must the minister. Must the soldier shun no dangers, stick at no difficulties, pass through thick and thin? must he use allowed weapons, approved armour of his general's directing, not of his own inventing? All this must the minister be and do . . . He must also please his Captain, not please himself, his appetite, his pride, his covetousness, much less must he please the enemies he is to fight against—the devil, the world, and the flesh."

III. A Sacred Charge.

The Levites had to do with consecrated things; the Kohathites with "the most holy things." They are most solemnly enjoined to exercise the most reverent care in the performance of their duties. They were to carry the most holy things, but not to touch them or curiously pry into them upon pain of death (verses 15, 17-20). The ministry of the Gospel is a charge still more sacred. He who is called to its high and holy duties is under the most solemn obligations to expound the revealed will of God, to break the bread of life to men, to labour diligently for the salvation of souls, and to seek in all things the glory of God. He is solemnly charged to "preach the word, convict, rebuke, exhort in all long suffering and teaching;" to "feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to

the flock." "They watch for souls, as they that must give account."

Our text suggests further, that the Christian ministry,—

IV. Demands the exercise of the highest faculties of those who are called to it.

It demands—

1. *Their mature powers.* Of the Levites numbered for active service none were to be under thirty or over fifty years old: they were to be in the very zenith of physical strength. And the duties of the Christian ministry challenge the utmost energies of those who undertake them. The design of this arrangement was probably twofold: (1) *That the service might be satisfactorily performed.* The Levitical duties in the wilderness could be properly discharged only by strong men. It is noteworthy that Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, and David when he began to reign, and John the Baptist when he entered upon his mission, and Jesus Christ when He commenced His ministry. But is this a rule binding the Church of Christ? Certainly not; for a man may be young in years, yet old in gifts, and in the graces of character which are necessary to this calling. And, on the other hand, a man may be old in years, yet a mere babe as regards the gifts and graces requisite for this sacred office. "Such as execute this holy calling," says Attersoll, "ought to be qualified with judgment, gravity, sobriety, integrity, diligence, yea with power, courage, strength, and to have agility and ability in mind and body, that they may do all things wisely, exactly, studiously, and constantly." (a)

2. *That the servants might not be overburdened.* That this end was contemplated in this arrangement appears from this, that the young men were taken into training when they were twenty-five years of age, and into laborious service when they were thirty, and the aged did not cease from service at fifty, but only from severe labours (see ch. viii. 23-26). And it is important that the energies of the young Christian minister be not over-taxed, lest both the

quality and duration of his service be diminished thereby. And as for the aged, as M. Henry remarks, "twenty years' good service was thought pretty well for one man."

2. *Their acquaintance with their duties.* The duties of the priests and of the Levites of each division are particularly set forth in this chapter. Each one must become acquainted with his own. The Christian minister must learn his Master's will, study his Master's Word, thoughtfully consider the needs of those amongst whom he labours, etc.

3. *A reverent spirit.* Reverently were the sacred vessels to be borne and regarded. Prying curiosity was utterly and sternly prohibited. "Note the great care," says Babington, "God hath to maintain reverence of holy things in men's hearts, knowing the corruption of man in soon despising

that which is common. And when He so wisheth reverence, shall man be careless of it?" And Attersoll: "We must do nothing that may make our ministry fruitless and bring it into contempt, but seek to adorn it and beautify it by all reverent carriage of ourselves in it, and in the discharge of the duties of it." (b)

4. *A faithful and dutiful spirit.* Each one was required to do his own duty, not meddling with those of others. Their well-being, and even their very life, depended upon the faithful performance by each one of his own service (verses 15, 17-20). The progress, health, even the stability of human society are inseparable from a faithful discharge of the duties of the Christian ministry. Upon this point the testimony of history is unequivocal. (See remarks on this point on ch. i. 47-54.)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We all see and must confess, that an aged man, ripe in judgment and experience, is more fit for government than a younger, destitute of such mature wisdom and knowledge, be the place ecclesiastical or civil. Wherenpon *Silla* said of *Marius* the younger, *Debere juvenem prius remo quam gubernaculo admoventi*. That a young man was first to be appointed to the oar and then to the stern. Fruit that is not ripe will serve so well neither for use nor store as ripe fruit will. The untimely fruit of a woman is a cause of grief, and not of comfort. The young fowls that are not fledged cannot fly, and green walls of any building should have no weight laid upon them till they were settled and sound. *Non difficulter delectabit oratio magis ornata quam solida, etc. Sed difficillime ut oportet, docebit, etc.* Easily may a speech that hath more beauty than substance please, but never so well teach as that which hath matter and substance in it. The one usually is the speech of young men, the other of elder. Look, saith *Plutarch*, how a dart differeth in his piercing, according to the strength of the arm that cast it, so differeth the word of a young and old man. The one cometh from a weaker strength, and so pierceth less; the other from a strong ability, and so entereth even through and through. The old man's speech, saith the same author again, is like to a strong and sweet ointment, that filleth all the room with his sweetness.—*Bishop Babington*.

Ministers have oftentimes given unto them in the Scripture the name of *Elders*. Many titles are given unto them, and every one of them carrieth some instruction and admonition with it unto the conscience. They have not

their names in vain, they are not idle sounds of vain words, but they offer the signification of some duty to be performed, and lead to the consideration of something to be practiced, as shepherds call to their remembrance to be busied in feeding; watchmen, to prove to them that they ought to have a vigilant care of the City of God; messengers, that they must not do their own business, but His that sent them. So they are called Elders, 1 Tim. v. 17, 19; 1 Pet. v. 1; Acts xiv, 23, xv. 2. xvi. 4, and xx, 17, to imprint and engrave in their hearts, the cogitation and consideration of the care, wisdom, sobriety, and stayedness that ought to be in men of that calling; all which gifts are for the most part proper to men of that age, for "days shall speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom," Job xxxii. 7. And therefore they are resembled unto them, not because they are so always in age, but because they should be like unto them, and have the properties and qualities of them.—*W. Attersoll*.

(b) Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,

Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own—

Paul should himself direct me. I would trace His master strokes, and draw from his design. I would express him simple, grave, sincere; In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain, And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste And natural in gesture; much impressed Himself, as conscious of His awful charge, And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds May feel it too; affectionate in look And tender in address, as well becomes A messenger of grace to guilty men.—*Couper*.

DIVINE SECRETS AND HUMAN CURIOSITY.

(Verse 20.)

I. There are certain things in the universe which are hidden from man.

The vessels of the sanctuary were concealed from the Levites. To the priests themselves the Holy of holies was a secret place, into which they dare not enter. And even the high priest might enter therein only once a year, and that after careful and significant preparation. In these arrangements we have an illustration of the truths that there are certain realms in the universe which are accessible only to God, and certain things which are concealed from man. This is the case,

1. *In the material universe.* Nature has secrets the existence of which is not even conjectured by her most enthusiastic students, and mysterious provinces into which neither the most daring nor the most reverent enquirer can enter. (a)

2. *In the arrangements of Providence.* In the dealings of God with nations and with the race as a whole, there are inscrutable mysteries to us. In His dealings with us as families and as individuals, there are things the wisdom and love and righteousness of which we cannot discover—things which perplex, and sometimes confound and distress us. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known." "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

3. *In the economy of redemption.* There are deepest, closest secrets here. We ask question after question, to which, at present, we receive no reply. "Great is the mystery of godliness," etc., "Which things the angels desire to look into."

4. *In the character and contents of the future.* "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Let us notice concerning these secrets that,

First: They are *inevitable*. "We are but of yesterday and know nothing, be-

cause our days upon the earth are as a shadow." It is utterly unreasonable to suppose that we, with our limited faculties and brief existence, should comprehend the works and ways, the thoughts and utterances of the Infinite and Eternal. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" Comp. Job xxxviii.—xli.

Second: They are *merciful*. The intense light of a fuller and clearer revelation might, were it given, smite us with spiritual blindness. As cloud and shadow and darkness in nature are good for us, so the Divine reserve is good for us spiritually. What man is there of us who could bear the revelation of the scenes and events which await him and his dear friends in the future? (b)

Third: They are *educational*. Mysteries provoke enquiry; and reverent enquiry conduces to intellectual and spiritual growth. Wonderful are the discoveries of wisdom, and power, of righteousness, and love which God will make to His children in the endless hereafter. Let us be thankful for the Divine reserve. "We do amiss," says Dr. Parker, "to stand before these sublime mysteries as we would stand before a vizored army of bloodthirsty foes. We should stand before them as before the veiled images of Love. They are Wisdom in disguise. They are Affection in shadow. They are Royalty in its roylest pomp."

II. Men are prone to curiously pry into hidden things.

This is clearly implied in the careful and minute directions for covering the sacred furniture of the sanctuary, in the prohibition of the text, and in the stern penalty annexed to any breach of this prohibition. There is a sad tendency in human nature, as it now is, to curious enquiry concerning forbidden things. It has been well said by Monroe: "Curiosity is a languid principle, where access is easy, and gratification immediate; remoteness and difficulty are

powerful incentives to its vigorous and lasting operations." In proportion as the secret things are regarded as mysterious, important, or sacred, will the strength of curiosity be in relation to them.

III. Irreverent prying into hidden things may lead to the most terrible results.

"They shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered" (or, "for an instant," see *Critical Notes*), "lest they die."

The curiosity of Eve concerning the fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" led to the spiritual death of our first parents and their countless posterity. All curious enquiries as to sacred things, and irreverent prying into Divine mysteries, tend to utterly destroy spirituality of mind and faith in the great Christian verities. "Curiosity," says Fuller, "is a kernel of the forbidden fruit, which still sticketh in the throat of a natural man, some-

times to the danger of his choking." Nor is it less perilous to the spiritually renewed man, leading, as it does, to the death of some of the highest and divinest things of the spirit. (c)

Conclusion:

1. *Guard against curiously enquiring into Divine secrets.* It may be that some of these secrets are part of that ineffable glory into which no man can enter and live.

2. *Be humble, seeing that we are surrounded by mysteries, countless and deep.* Humility becometh the ignorant.

3. *Be reverent in all our enquiries into Divine things.* "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," &c. "The meek will He guide in judgment," &c. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

4. *Let us be diligent in the performance of our manifest duty.* "If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The eye can alight on no spot free from the presence of mystery. Questions may be asked concerning a grass-blade or an insect, which no intellect could answer. Men know much about the *outside* of things, but of the interior organism of the universe, its fine balances, adaptations, springs, impulses, relationships, and purposes, they understand little or nothing. No intelligent being can observe the universe without knowing that it is a magnificent mystery. God has imposed silence upon it. In the thunder-roar of the ocean we never hear the revelation of its mysteries. The whirlwind gives no account of its hidden way and unknown tabernacle. The glorious stars, in their nocturnal vigils ever shine, but never speak the mystery of their birth. Mysterious, indeed, are all things. Worlds suspended upon nothing, the calm, majestic roll of countless orbs, the dew of the morning, the glare of the lightning, the riven strata of the earth, the pulsation of unnumbered millions upon millions of hearts, the chequered history of life, the complicated workings and evolutions of intellect, *all* bespeak the power of a Mysterious, Dread Being, whose ways are unsearchable.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) O heaven! that one might read the book of fate;

And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and the continent
(Weary of solid firmness) melt itself

Into the sea! and, other times, to see
The beauteous girdle of the ocean,
Too wide for Neptune's hips; how chances
mock

And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors! O, if this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress
through,

What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book, and sit him down and
die.

*Shakespeare. Second part of King Henry IV.
III., I.*

Were the time of our death foreseen, what a melancholy character would it impart to the pursuits and occupations of the human race! If every man saw the moment of his death continually before him, how would his thoughts be fixed to the fatal spot; and, upon its near approach, the consideration of it would probably absorb every other. With respect to our fellow-creatures, how would it poison the springs of enjoyment, were parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, able to calculate with certainty the period of each others' lives! We should seem to be walking among the victims of death; the scenes of human existence would lose all cheerfulness, animation, and beauty. The interests of society would also sustain most serious injury. Many great and noble enterprises would never have been begun could the

persons who, in the hope of life, engaged in them have foreseen that before they could be concluded, they themselves would be snatched away by the hand of death. Many discoveries, by which great benefit has been conferred on the world would not have been elicited. Few efforts probably would be made to attain any object, the consequences of which terminate with the life of the party, if he foresaw that they would be intercepted by death. Who would venture to engage in any lucrative employment if he certainly knew that the benefit would not be even partially realized during the time of his mortal existence? But, happily for mankind, events are concealed—duties only are made known.—*Rob. Hall, A.M.*

(c) How notably again doth this commandment of hiding and folding them up, teach us to beware of curiosity in things not revealed. What God is pleased we should know, that safely we may search for and seek to know, but further we may not go. We must not have an ear to hear when God hath not a mouth to speak. *To eat much honey, saith Solomon, is not good;* and to search out curiously God's Majesty is to endanger myself to be oppressed with His glory. *Seek not out things which are too hard for thee, neither search the things rashly which are too mighty for thee, saith wise Sirach.* But what God hath commanded thee, think of that with

reverence, be not curious in many of His works: for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things that be secret. Be not curious in superfluous things, for many things are showed unto thee above the capacity of men. The meddling with such hath beguiled many, and an evil opinion hath deceived their judgment. Thou canst not see without eyes, profess not therefore the knowledge that thou hast not. Thales the philosopher gazed so upon the stars, that he fell into the ditch before him, and his maid mocked him. Seneca wisely complained, that a great part of our life was spent in doing nothing, a greater part in doing ill, and the greatest part of all in doing that which appertains not to us. This is curiosity in other men's business, and foolish meddling with needless things. Socrates was wise, and said it wisely: "*Quæ super nos, nihil ad nos;*" Matters that are above us, belong not to us." David, a man indeed with another light than Socrates had, professeth we know, as he was not high minded, neither had any proud looks; so he did not exercise himself in matters that were too high for him. But he did wean his soul, and keep it under even as a young child, &c. Bernard taxeth this foul fault in these words, "*Multi student magis alta quam apta proferre:*" Many study to utter rather high matters than fit matters." Let us avoid this fault.—*Bishop Babington.*

THE BURDENS OF LIFE.

(Verses 21-33.)

In these verses we have the Divine directions as to the service of the Gershonites and the Merarites. They present an instructive illustration of the burdens of human life. Regarding them in this light, they suggest concerning these burdens that they are—

I. Distributed to all men.

The Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites each had their service and burden. (See verses 19, 27, 32.) And "from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old" no man of either of these families was exempted from duty. "Aaron and his sons shall appoint them every one to his service and to his burden." And now there is no human life in this world without its burden of some kind and degree. It is not simply those who are manifestly oppressed, or afflicted, or sorely tried, that have a burden to bear. Could we read the inner history of those whose life seems most pleasant and prosperous and

favoured, we should doubtless find some secret sorrow, or wearing anxiety, or life-long disappointment. There is no sunshine without its shadow, no happy family without its trial or sorrow, and no individual life without its burden of some kind or other. "Every individual experience," says Dr. Huntington, "has, soon or late, its painful side, its crucial hours, when there is darkness over all the land, and we cry out to know if God has forsaken us. For the time, longer or shorter, we taste only the bitter, and feel only the thorns. The separations of death, the distance between our aspiration and performance, unsatisfied ambition, labouring year after year in vain, affection returned by indifference, the symptoms of fatal disease, former energy prostrate, a friend alienated, a child depraved, an effort to do good construed into an impertinence,—unconquerable obstacles that we cannot measure and can scarcely speak of,

heaped up against our best designs—these are some of the most frequent shapes of the misery; but no list is full. The one essential thing is that the will is crossed, crucified. Character is everywhere put into this school of suffering.” (a)

II. Distributed variously.

All men are burdened, but all are not alike burdened. The burdens of human life—

1. *Differ in kind.*—The burden of the Kohathites consisted of “the most holy things,” the furniture of the sanctuary; that of the Gershonites, of the hanging, curtains, and coverings of the tabernacle, with “their cords, and all the instruments of their service;” and that of the Merarites, of the pillars, boards, bars, sockets, and the more solid parts of the tabernacle. So the burdens of human life are of various kinds. Some labour under a great load of temporal poverty, others suffer more or less throughout their entire life by reason of bodily afflictions, the burden of others is some crushing family trial, of others some sore and secret sorrow, and of others some profound and painful longing which finds no satisfaction, &c.

2. *Differ in degree.* The burden of the Merarites was much heavier than that of either the Kohathites or Gershonites. And the burdens of men now are not alike in weight. Some are much more heavily laden than others. All good men are not tried so severely as Job was. The Lord Jesus Himself bore the heaviest burden of all. As compared with His, our heaviest load is light. And comparing the burdens of men one with another, some appear almost free, while others labour under a heavy load.

III.—Distributed Divinely.

By Divine direction Aaron and his sons were to appoint to each one his burden. (See verses 19, 27, 32.) In the case of the Merarites the direction as to this appointment was very explicit: “By name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.” “This direction, which occurs only in reference to the charge of the Merarites,

imports apparently that ‘the instruments’ were to be assigned, no doubt, by Ithamar and his immediate assistants, to their bearers singly, and nominatim. These instruments comprised the heavier parts of the Tabernacle; and the order seems intended to prevent individual Merarites choosing their own burden, and so throwing more than the proper share on others.” — *Speaker's Comm.* The burdens of human life do not fall by chance or accident. God is not the Author of the burdens which oppress human life. Pain and poverty, sorrow and trial, are the offspring of sin. But God *regulates* the burdens of men. No trial befalls us without His permission, and He determines the extent and severity of every trial. (Comp. Job i. 12, ii. 6.) “Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand.” “He shall choose our inheritance for us.” The Divine regulation of trial affords a guarantee that no man shall be overburdened; for the Lord knoweth how much we can bear; He knoweth us altogether, and He has promised to bestow grace adequate to our need. “As thy days so shall thy strength be.” “My grace is sufficient for thee,” &c. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,” &c.

“God will keep his own anointed;
Nought shall harm them, none condemn;
All their trials are appointed;
All must work for good to them:
All shall help them
To their heavenly diadem.”—*Lyte.*

Our text further suggests that the Burdens of Life should be—

IV. Patiently borne.

We do not read of any murmuring amongst the Levites because of the duties assigned to any of them. Each one appears to have accepted his allotted service, and performed its duties. Let each one of us learn to bear his life-burden without murmuring, to accept his lot in life cheerfully, to do his duty faithfully.

1. *God regulates our burden, let us therefore be content under it. (b)*

2. *God sanctifies our burden to most blessed ends, let us therefore be thankful.* "We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience," &c. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience," etc. (c)

3. *God will soon deliver us from our burden, let us therefore be hopeful.* "The time will come," says Babington, "that our God will free us, and then we shall receive an eternal reward. Remember what you read: *The Lord God of Israel, saith David, hath given rest unto His people, that they may dwell*

in Jerusalem for ever, and the Levites shall no more bear the Tabernacle, and all the vessels for the service thereof. So shall it be said one day of you, of me, of all the members of the Lord's body. The Lord hath given rest, and we shall no more carry our burdens and portions of woe in this world, but live in the heavenly Jerusalem for ever. O, wished rest, and ten thousand times welcome when God is pleased! Do men fear a safe harbour in a mighty storm? Do men grieve to come home to their own houses after a long and painful journey? No, no, we know; and no more should we shrink to find heavenly rest."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) What is included in the term *burden*? Whatever makes right living, according to the law of God, difficult to a sincere man *that* is a burden. Whatever thing within or without a man, in his nature, in his habits, or in his circumstances, makes it hard for him to live purely and rightly—that is included in this term *burden*. It may be in his mental constitution; it may be in his bodily health; it may be in the habits of his education; it may be in his relation to worldly affairs; it may be in his domestic circumstances; it may be in his peculiar liabilities to temptation and sin. It includes the whole catalogue of conditions, and influences, and causes, that weigh men down, and hinder them, when they are endeavouring to live lives of rectitude.—*H. W. Beecher.*

To-day I had a long and strange interview with a lady who has recently become a member of the congregation. . . . She asked me if I had ever known a case of trial so severe as hers. "Yes," I replied, "numbers; it is the case of all. Suffering is very common, so is disappointment." "Are our affections to be all withered?" "Very often, I believe." "Then why were they given me?" "I am sure I cannot tell you that, but I suppose it would not have been very good for you to have had it all your own way?" "Then do you think I am better for this blighting succession of griefs?" "I do not know, but I know you ought to be." "Wordsworth" was lying open on the table, and I pointed to her these lines:—

"Then was the truth received into my heart,
That under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow,
Honour, which could not else have been a faith,
An elevation and a sanctity;
If new strength be not given nor old restored,
The blame is ours, not nature's."

The deep undertone of this world is sadness. a solemn bass occurring at measured intervals, and heard through all other tones. Ultimately, all the strains of this world's music resolve themselves into that tone; and I believe that, rightly felt, the Cross, and the Cross alone, interprets the mournful mystery of life—the sorrow of the Highest, the Lord of Life; the result of error and sin, but ultimately remedial, purifying, and exalting.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A., Life and Letters.*

(b) Contentation (*i.e.* contentment) is a ready and approved medicine for all miseries and maladies whatsoever. No man is troubled with any grief or disease, but he is most willing to hear of a salve for it. This is sovereign for this purpose. It easeth the burden of all afflictions, it taketh away the smart of all sores; it poureth oil and wine into our wounds, and of half dead it maketh us alive again; it maketh a rough way plain and crooked things straight. It casteth down high hills, and maketh the path easy before us. It turneth outward wants into inward comforts. It maketh the bond to be free, the poor to be rich, the sick to be whole, the miserable to be happy, and such as are owners of nothing to be lords of all things. Give an hearty draught of this strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and a cup of this wine to him that hath an heavy heart, it will make him forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. This we see in the Apostle Paul, he had drunk of the wine of contentation, (2 Cor. vi. 9. 10) and therefore saith, "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."—*W. Attersoll.*

- (c) "I know," is all the mourner saith,
 "Knowledge by suffering entereth,
 And life is perfected by death ;
 "I am content to touch the brink
 Of pain's dark goblet, and I think
 My bitter drink a wholesome drink.
 "I am content to be so weak ;
 Put strength into the words I speak,
 For I am strong in what I seek.
 "I am content to be so bare
 Before the archers ; everywhere
 My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.
 "Glory to God—to God," he saith ;
 "Knowledge by suffering entereth,
 And life is perfected by death."
 Burdens are not pleasant ; yet they are

profitable. They develop strength. The only way to make strong men is to impose burdens that require strength ; then if they have the substance in them, it will come out. We know a man who has been struggling for years to escape from business cares, yet they have accumulated upon him. Every measure of relief has brought additional work and sometimes extreme trial. But he has risen in power as the load was increased, and he has grown to be a man of might. Those who run, flinch, dodge, faint, as crushing cares increase, are broken and suffer loss ; but those who stand, fight, tug, hold on and cry to God, grow strong. It is a misfortune always to have an easy time, a blessing to have work to do which taxes all our powers and then taxes more and more.—*The Study.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITTLE THINGS.

(Verses 31–32.)

In the charge of Merari we find not only the heaviest things and most cumbersome, but also some little things which are specially mentioned. "Their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service ; and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden." It is upon these little things that we would fix attention. From the fact that we have here Divine directions concerning such small things as "pins and cords," we infer *the importance of little things*. The following considerations will help us to realise this.

I. The completeness and perfection of great things is impossible apart from due attention to little things.

These "pins and cords" were essential to the completeness of the tabernacle. By tiny and delicate touches the enchanting beauty of the painting is achieved. By scrupulous attention to details the greatest inventions have been brought to successful issues. A wise economy in small expenses has had no little to do in many instances in the accumulation of great wealth. "An onlooker, observing the slight taps given to a statue by Canova, spoke as if he thought the artist to be trifling, but was rebuked by this reply : "The touches which you ignorantly hold in such small esteem are the very things which make the difference between the failure of a

bungler and the *chef d'œuvre* of a master."

II. The most important issues sometimes depend upon what seem to us slight circumstances.

Trivial incidents sometimes appear to constitute the great turning points in life. How often in the life of Joseph, as we view it to-day, events of incalculable importance depended upon what men call "the merest chance," or the most trivial incident ! What stupendous issues depend upon the preservation of the imperilled life of that goodly child in his frail ark of bulrushes on the Nile ! A remarkable illustration of our point occurs in the life of the distinguished F. W. Robertson. He had a passionate enthusiasm for military life, had chosen the army as his profession, and was studying for it, and application had been made to the Horse Guards for a commission for him. "To two great objects," says his biographer—"the profession of arms which he had chosen, and the service of Christ in that profession—he now devoted himself wholly." The circumstances which led him to abandon that profession for the calling of the Christian minister are remarkable. This result was brought about by the influence of the Rev. Mr. Davies, who thus relates the origin of their friendship:—"The daughter of Lady French,

at whose house I met my friend, had been seriously ill. She was prevented from sleeping by the barking of a dog in one of the adjoining houses. This house was Captain Robertson's. A letter was written to ask that the dog might be removed; and so kind and acquiescent a reply was returned, that Lady French called to express her thanks. She was much struck at that visit by the manner and bearing of the eldest son, and, in consequence, an intimacy grew up between the families." Mr. Robertson himself thus refers to this matter:—"If I had not met a certain person, I should not have changed my profession; if I had not known a certain lady, I should not probably have met this person; if that lady had not had a delicate daughter who was disturbed by the barking of my dog; if my dog had not barked that night, I should now have been in the dragoons, or fertilising the soil of India. Who can say that these things were not ordered, and that, apparently, the merest trifle did not produce failure and a marred existence?" ("Failure and a marred existence"—so it seemed to him then. But how very different it really was! How different must it appear to him now!) Such slight circumstances, apparently, led to his entering upon the career of a Christian minister—a career so rich in the highest results. (a)

III. Life itself is composed almost entirely of little things.

Great events and noteworthy experiences are very rare things in life. Day after day we live in the performance of small duties, amidst ordinary circumstances and events. With the exception of a very few remarkable events, our life is made up of the most ordinary and common-place, and apparently, unimportant things. And yet life itself, as a whole, is a thing of utterly unspeakable importance, most momentous in its character, its influence, its capabilities, &c.

IV. Character, which to each of us is the most important thing, is formed almost entirely of littles.

"Character," says Beecher, "is not a massive unit; it is a fabric rather. It is an artificial whole made up by the interply of ten thousand threads. Every faculty is a spinner, spinning every day its threads, and almost every day threads of a different colour. Myriads and myriads of webbed products proceed from the many active faculties of the human soul, and character is made up by the weaving together of all these innumerable threads of daily life. Its strength is not merely in the strength of some simple unit, but in the strength of numerous elements." The great Williams of Wern, when preaching at Bala, where many women are employed in knitting stockings, inquired, "How is character formed?" "*Gradually*," he replied, "just as you Bala women knit stockings—a stitch at a time." (b)

Conclusion:

1. *Be careful as to the little things of personal character and conduct.* "Let us not neglect little duties, let us not allow ourselves in little faults. Whatever we may like to think, nothing is really of small importance that affects the soul. All diseases are small at the beginning. Many a death-bed begins with a 'little cold.' Nothing that can grow is large all at once; the greatest sin must have a beginning. Nothing that is great comes to perfection in a day; characters and habits are all the result of little actions. Little strokes made the ark which saved Noah. Little pins held firm the tabernacle which was the glory of Israel. We, too, are travelling through a wilderness. Let us be like the family of Merari, and be careful not to leave the pins behind."

Let us beware of small sins. (c)

Let us be faithful in small duties. (d)

2. *Be careful as to the little things of church life and work.* Let the most feeble member of the Church do the work for which he is fitted faithfully. Let not the least or lowliest duty be neglected, or the welfare and prosperity of the whole will be thereby injured. When all the members of the Church

—the least gifted and the most gifted—are faithful in life and work; and when every duty—the least as well as

the greatest—is faithfully performed, great will be her prosperity and her power.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Where God in generous fulness dwells,
Nor small nor great is known;
He paints the tiniest floweret-cells
O'er emerald meadows strawn;
And sees, but not with kinder eyes,
The heavens grow rich with sunset dyes;
Both ministrant to beauty's sense,
Both signs of one Omnipotence.

He comes not forth with pageant grand
His marvels to perform.

A cloud "the bigness of a hand"
Can blacken heaven with storm.
A grain of dust, if he arrange,
The fortunes of a planet change.
An insect reef can overwhelm
The stately navies of a realm.

There are no trifles. Arks as frail
As bore God's prince of old,
On many a buoyant Nile stream sail
The age's heirs to hold.
From Jacob's love on Joseph shed,
Came Egypt's wealth and Israel's bread;
From Ruth's chance gleanings in the corn,
The Psalmist sang,—the Christ was born.

W. M. Punshon.

(b) Have you ever watched an icicle as it formed? You noticed how it froze one drop at a time, until it was a foot long or more. If the water was clear, the icicle remained clear, and sparkled brightly in the sun; but

if the water was but slightly muddy, the icicle looked foul, and its beauty was spoiled. Just so our characters are forming: one little thought or feeling at a time adds its influence. If each thought be pure and right, the soul will be lovely, and sparkle with happiness; but if impure and wrong, there will be deformity and wretchedness.—*Temperance Anecdotes, in Dict. of Illust.*

(c) Little things are seeds of great ones. Little cruelties are gems of great ones. Little treacheries are, like small holes in raiment, the beginning of large ones. Little dishonesties are like the drops that work through the bank of the river; a drop is an engineer: it tunnels a way for its fellows, and they, rushing, prepare for all behind them. A worm in a ship's plank proves, in time, worse than a cannon-ball.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Let us be content to work,
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little. 'Twill employ
Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin.
Who makes the head consents to miss the
point;
Who makes the point agrees to leave the
head;

And if a man should cry, "I want a pin,
And I must make it straightway, head and
point,"

His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants.
Elizabeth B. Browning.

PROPORTION BETWEEN NUMBER AND SERVICE.

(Verses 34—49.)

In these verses we have the account of the numbering of the Levites for active service, according to the command given unto Moses and Aaron in verses 1-3. The result here recorded is this: Of males from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, there were of Kohathites 2,750; of Gershonites, 2,630; and of Merarites, 3,200, making a total of 8,580. This number bears a just proportion to that of all the males of the Levites from a month old and upward, which was 22,000. "But the number of Merarites available for the sacred service bears an unusually large proportion to the total number of males of that

family, which is (iii. 34) 6,200. Looking at the relation of the numbers to the service required of them we discover illustrations of—

I. The Wisdom of God.

"By this diversity of numbers among the Levite families," saith Trapp, "God showeth His wisdom, saith an interpreter, in fitting men for the work, whereunto He hath appointed them, whether it requireth multitude or gifts. 'For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom,' etc. (1 Cor. xii. 8-12). It is reported that in Luther's house was found written, '*Res et verba Phillippus, res sine verbis Lutherus, verba sine re Erasmus, Melancthon hath both*'

matter and words ; Luther hath matter but wants words ; Erasmus hath words, but wants matter.' Every one hath his own share ; all are not alike gifted." M. Henry : "The Merarites were but 6,200 in all, and yet of these there were 3,200 serviceable men, that is, more than half. The greatest burden lay upon that family, the boards and pillars and sockets ; and God so ordered it that, though they were the fewest in number, yet they should have the most able men among them ; for whatever service God calls men to He will furnish them for it, and give strength in proportion to the work, grace sufficient." God's appointments to service are ever made in perfect wisdom. There are ever a fitness and proportion between the workers and the work. (a)

II. The reasonableness of the Divine requirements.

"Though the sum total of effective Levites," says Greenfield, "was very small compared with that of the other tribes ; yet they would be far more than could be employed at once in this service. But they might carry by turns and ease one another, and thus do the

whole expeditiously and cheerfully. They would also have their own tents to remove, and their own families to take care of." There was an ample number for the performance of the work ; and its distribution amongst so many would render it comparatively easy to everyone. God's claims upon us and our service are in the highest degree reasonable. He is a kind and gracious Master. "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." And if He summon us to difficult tasks, He will increase our wisdom and strength, so we shall not be overmatched. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (b)

We have also in this section of the history an illustration of—

III. The exemplary obedience of the servants of the Lord.

We see how carefully and faithfully Moses and Aaron carried out the directions which they received from Him. In this they are an example to us. (See notes and illustrations bearing on this point given on chaps. ii. 34, iii. 16.)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) God's wisdom appears in the various inclinations and conditions of men. As there is a distinction of several creatures, and several qualities in them, for the common good of the world, so among men there are several inclinations and several abilities, as donatives from God, for the common advantage of human society ; as several channels cut out from the same river run several ways, and refresh several soils, one man is qualified for one employment, another marked out by God for a different work, yet all of them fruitful to bring in a revenue of glory to God, and a harvest of profit to the rest of mankind. How unuseful would the body be if it had but "one member" (1 Cor. xii. 19) ! How unprovided would a house be if it had not vessels of dishonour as well as of honour ! The corporation of mankind would be as much a chaos as the matter of the heavens and the earth was before it was distinguished by several forms breathed into it at the creation. Some are inspired with a particular genius for one art, some for another ; every man hath a distinct talent. If all were husbandmen where would be the instruments to plough and reap ? If all were artificers where would they have corn to nourish themselves ? All men are like vessels,

and parts in the body, designed for distinct offices and functions for the good of the whole. As the variety of gifts in the Church is a fruit of the wisdom of God for the preservation and increase of the Church, so the variety of inclinations and employments in the world is a fruit of the wisdom of God for the preservation and subsistence of the world by mutual commerce.—*Charnocke*.

(b) Power is the measure of obligation. It is the circumference that bounds every line, starting from the centre of duty. What we cannot do, we are not bound to attempt. The command that outstrips our capacity is no law to us. Why is religion not binding on brutes ? God is as truly their Creator and Sustainer as He is ours—they have not the power. Our faculties are adequate to the Divine will respecting us. They are made *for* it—made *to* it. The sun is not more nicely adjusted to the work of lighting the planets—the rolling atmosphere to the purposes of life—these bodies to all the laws, influences, and sceneries of this material universe—than are all the powers of the soul adjusted to the work of worship. To trace effects to causes, to discern moral distinctions, to reverence greatness, to love excellence, to praise goodness—these are

the sacred functions of religion; and whilst that seraph, glowing with rapture in the full sunlight of the Eternal, can perform nothing higher, that human babe, gazing for the first time with wonder at the stars, has ample powers to do the same.—*D. Thomas, D.D.*

The whole relation of discipleship is a relation of liberty. No one goes to his duty because he must, but only because his heart is in it. His inclinations are that way, for his heart is in the Master's love, and he follows Him gladly. It, no doubt, seems to you when you look on, only as strangers to Christ, that this must be a hard and dry service, for you see no attraction in it. But the reason is that your heart is not in it. With a new heart,

quickened by the grace of Christ, all this would be changed. It will then seem wholly attractive. All the currents of your love will run that way, and the freest freedom of your nature will be to go after Christ. No sacrifice will be hard—no service a burden. The wonder now will be that all men do not rush in after Christ to be His eager followers.—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

“In service which Thy love appoints,
There are no bonds for me;
My secret heart is taught the truth
That makes Thy children free.
A life of self-renouncing love
Is one of liberty.”—*Waring.*

CHAPTER V.

THE EXCLUSION OF THE UNCLEAN.

(Verse 1-4.)

“Now that the nation was regularly organised, the sacred tribe dedicated, and the sanctuary with the tokens of God's more immediate Presence provided with its proper place and attendants in the camp, it remained to attest and to vindicate, by modes in harmony with the spirit of the theocratical law, the sanctity of the people of God. This accordingly is the general purpose of the directions given in this and the next chapter. Thus the congregation of Israel was made to typify the Church of God, within which, in its perfection, nothing that offends can be allowed to remain” (*cf. Matt. viii. 22; Rev. xxi. 27.*)—*Speaker's Comm.*

In the verses now before us we have the directions for the expulsion of unclean persons out of the camp. The laws as to ceremonial uncleanness are given with considerable minuteness in *Lev. xi., xv., xxi., xxii., and Num. xix.* But it appears that they are now carried out for the first time.

We shall look at our text in two aspects.

I. As a Sanitary Measure.

A number of rules and regulations for securing the cleanliness and health of the people were promulgated and enforced. Some of the sanitary regu-

lations “seem minute and indelicate to modern ideas, but were, doubtless, intended to correct unseemly or unhealthful practices, either of the Hebrew people or of neighbouring tribes.” Some have asserted that the reason for the expulsion of every leper from the camp was that the disease was contagious. So scholarly and well-informed a writer as *Dr. Milman* says that “the disease was highly infectious.” But this is extremely doubtful. “All who have looked closest into the matter,” says *Archbishop Trench*, “agree that the sickness was incommunicable by ordinary contact from one person to another. A leper might transmit it to his children, or the mother of a leper's children might take it from him; but it was by no ordinary contact communicable from one person to another. . . . Naaman, the leper, commanded the armies of Syria (2 Kings v. 1); Gehazi, with his leprosy that never should be cleansed (2 Kings v. 27), talked familiarly with the king of apostate Israel (2 Kings viii 5). And even where the law of Moses was in force, the stranger and the sojourner were expressly exempted from the ordinances relating to leprosy; which could not have been, had the

disease been contagious. How, moreover, should the Levitical priests, had the disease been this creeping infection, have ever themselves escaped it, obliged as they were by their very office to submit the leper to actual handling and closest examination?" It seems to us indisputable "that, if the disease is contagious, a very rare and critical concurrence of circumstances is required to develop the contagion." There were special reasons for selecting this disease from all others for exclusion from the camp. "The Egyptian and Syrian climates, but especially the rainless atmosphere of the former, are very prolific in skin diseases. . . . The Egyptian bondage, with its studied degradations and privations, and especially the work of the kiln under the Egyptian sun, must have had a frightful tendency to generate this class of disorders; hence Manetho (*Joseph. cont.*, Ap. I. 26) asserts that the Egyptians drove out the Israelites as infected with leprosy—a strange reflex, perhaps, of the Mosaic narrative of the 'plagues' of Egypt, yet also probably containing a germ of truth. The sudden and total change of food, air, dwelling, and mode of life, caused by the Exodus, to this nation of newly emancipated slaves may possibly have had a further tendency to skin disorders, and novel and severe repressive measures may have been required in the desert-moving camp to secure the public health, or to allay the panic of infection. . . . In the contact of a dead body there was no notion of contagion, for the body the moment life was extinct was as much ceremonially unclean as in a state of decay. Why, then, in leprosy must we have recourse to a theory of contagion? It would perhaps be nearer the truth to say that uncleanness was imputed, rather to inspire the dread of contagion, than in order to check contamination as an actual process. . . . On the whole, though we decline to rest leprous defilement merely on popular notions of abhorrence, dread of contagion, and the like; yet a deference to them may be admitted to have been shown, especially

at the time when the people were, from previous habits and associations, up to the moment of the actual Exodus, most strongly imbued with the scrupulous purity and refined ceremonial example of the Egyptians on these subjects."—*Smith's Dict. of the Bible.*

In each case mentioned in the text, "every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead,"—the person was put without the camp because of ceremonial pollution, not because of contagion. It was the will of God that the people should cultivate the most scrupulous physical cleanliness. In a camp composed of more than two millions of persons cleanliness was of the utmost importance. Dirt is the prolific parent of disease. Wise sanitary measures are the most certain means of insuring bodily strength and safety. (a) Two things in the text show that this sanitary measure was regarded as of great importance by the Lord.

1. *The universal application of the rule.* "Every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out." No one whatever was exempted from its application. When Miriam, the prophetess, and sister of Moses and Aaron, was smitten with leprosy, she "was shut out from the camp seven days." With strict impartiality the rule was carried out.

2. *The sacred reason by which it was enforced.* "That they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." The Lord is the God of cleanliness and health. All impurity is an abomination to Him. Purity of body, of home, of towns and cities, is well-pleasing to Him. As a condition of the Divine Presence, let us cultivate comprehensive and scrupulous cleanliness. Impurity separates from Him.

II. As a spiritual parable.

Ceremonial uncleanness was intended to illustrate spiritual uncleanness. The ceremonial purity which was insisted upon in the camp of Israel was typical of the spiritual purity which God requires of His people. By enacting that

any one who had anything to do with the dead should be regarded as unclean, and put out of the camp, the Lord teaches that sin and death are not from Him, and cannot dwell with Him. And the loathsome and terrible disease of "leprosy was the outward and visible sign of the innermost spiritual corruption, the sacrament of death." The leper "was himself a dreadful parable of death,"—"a walking grave." Thus, parabolically, the text represents sin—

1. *As a defiling thing.* The sinner is morally unclean. Deeply did David feel this when he cried, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God." Every sin proceeds from the corruption of the human heart, and tends to increase that corruption.

2. *As a deadly thing.* "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Every sinful act tends to kill some element or power of the spiritual life. The life of the soul consists in truth and trust, righteousness and love, reverence and obedience, etc. Every lie spoken or acted is a blow aimed at the very life of truth in us. Every infidelity of which we are guilty tends to destroy our trust. So in relation to every element of the soul's life. Sin is deadly in its character and influence.

3. *As a separating thing.* The unclean were to be put out of the camp. Ceremonial uncleanness involved forfeiture of social privileges and of citizenship among the people of God for a time. "The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord." Where sin is cherished God will not dwell. (1) *The openly and persistently wicked should be expelled from the Church on earth.* (a) *Because of their*

corrupt influence. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" 1 Cor. v. 6-13. (b) *Because of the dishonour to God which their presence in the Church involves.* He has promised to dwell in His Church, and to manifest Himself to His people as He does not unto the world. Matt. xviii. 20; John xiv. 21-23. And He demands that His people shall follow after entire holiness. He demands our entire consecration. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" &c. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." Our Lord "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," etc. Such is the Divine pattern of the Church and people of God: and He is dishonoured when the openly and persistently wicked are allowed to remain in His Church. With such a church HE will not dwell. (b) (2) *The wicked will be excluded from the city of God above.* "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," etc. Rev. xxi. 27. All the citizens of that glorious realm "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (c)

Conclusion.

1. *He who demands this purity has provided the means whereby we may attain unto it.* "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. *Let us diligently use the means which He has provided.* "Wash you, make you clean," etc. Isa. i. 16, 18. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Cleanliness may be defined to be the emblem of purity of mind, and may be recommended under the three following heads; as it is a mark of politeness, as it produces affection, and as it bears analogy to chastity of sentiment. First, it is a mark of politeness, for it is universally agreed upon, that no one unadorned with this virtue can go into company without giving a manifold offence; the different nations of the world are as much distinguished by their cleanliness as by their arts and sciences; the more they are advanced in civilization the more they consult this part of politeness. Secondly, cleanliness may be said to be the foster-mother of affection. Beauty commonly produces love, but cleanliness preserves it. Age itself is not unamiable while it is preserved clean and unsullied; like a piece of metal constantly kept smooth and bright, we look on it with more pleasure than on a new vessel cankered with rust. I might further observe, that as cleanliness renders us agreeable to others, it makes us easy to ourselves, that it is an excellent preservative of health; and that several vices, both of mind and body, are inconsistent with the habit of it. In the third place, it bears a great analogy with chastity of sentiment, and naturally inspires refined feelings and passions; we find from experience, that through the prevalence of custom, the most vicious actions lose their horror by being made familiar to us. On the contrary, those who live in the neighbourhood of good examples fly from the first appearance of what is shocking; and thus pure and unsullied thoughts are naturally suggested to the mind by those objects that perpetually encompass us when they are beautiful and elegant in their kind.—*Addison*.

It is wonderful how views of life depend upon exercise and right management of the physical constitution. Nor is this, rightly looked at, any cause for perplexity, though it seems so at first; for though you might be inclined to view it as a degradation of our higher nature to find it so dependent on the

lower, and hope and faith and energy resultant from a walk or early hours—yet, in fact, it is only a proof that all the laws of our manifold being are sacred, and that disobedience to them is punished by God. And the punishment in one department of our nature of the transgressions committed in the other—as, for instance, when mental gloom comes from uncleanness or physical inertia, and, on the other hand, where ill-health ensues from envy or protracted doubt—is but one of many instances of the law of vicarious suffering. We are, as it were, two, and one suffers by what the other does.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A., Life and Letters*.

(b) They are deceived that think it is not necessary to purge out the great and gross offenders. The Church is the City of God, excommunication is the sword; it is the school of Christ, this is the rod, as the Apostle calleth it; it is the Temple of God, this is, as it were, the whip, to scourge out such as abuse it and themselves; it is the body of Christ, this is as a medicine to cure the diseases of it; it is the vine and sheepfold, this serveth to keep the foxes and wolves from it.—*W. Attersoll*.

(c) How real is that description of sin—"it defileth, it worketh abomination, it maketh a lie!" It is uncleanness, unloveliness, untruth! But it shall "in no wise enter" heaven. There "shall be nothing to hurt and to destroy." Moral evil cannot for a moment dwell in it. As though the leprosy of sin had struck too inextricably into the abode of man, had even contaminated the habitation of angels, we anticipate a scene purer than earth could afford however it were changed, purer than the heavens from which the angels fell. And when we can conceive of such a state, that which gives to law all its power of sway and yet debars its curse, that is heaven, the highest heaven, the heaven of heavens! We know it by this, we desire it for this, "wherein dwelleth righteousness!"—*R. W. Hamilton, LL.D., D.D.*

WHERE GOD DWELLS THERE MUST BE PURITY.

(Verse 2.)

"Put out of the camp every leper."

God gave the people moral, civil, and sanitary laws. These in the context were partly sanitary. He would teach the people habits of cleanliness, which were essential to the health of the camp. Filth is a child of sin, and the fruitful parent of diseases which decimate mankind. But the text is something more

than a sanitary precaution; for it is probable that leprosy was not contagious, and the ordinances respecting it did not apply to the sojourner and the stranger. Why then the injunction of the text? No doubt the great object was to enforce the ideas of purity and holiness, and to teach them that God cannot dwell among the sinful and impure.

Leprosy has ever been considered a striking illustration of sin. For instance,—1. *Sin, like leprosy, is a transgression of law.* All evils, physical as well as moral, arise from disregard of some law. Natural laws have their penalties; they cannot be broken with impunity. Cholera, fevers, and other terrible scourges that visit us, are penalties. We call them “visitations from God,” and such they are in the sense of being penalties for breaking the laws that He has imposed on us. Intemperance, vice, etc., breed disease, poison the blood, ruin the body, and become curses to posterity. Leprosy was caused through disregard of the laws of health, and the Bible definition of sin is “the transgression of the law.”

2. *Sin, like leprosy, is very loathsome and defiling.* Leprosy spreads over the whole body, destroying its beauty and vitality, and rendering it most repulsive in appearance. In this it is a meet emblem of sin, which corrupts, degrades, and defiles the soul of man. 3. *Sin, like leprosy, is incurable by man.* No human skill could help the leper. “Am I God to kill and to make alive?” cried the king of Israel when Naaman came to him. Only God could cure the disease. Sin, in like manner, baffles human skill. God alone can remove this curse and blight from the soul. No human priest, no work of merit, can affect the malady. The stain is too deep for anything but the blood of Christ to wash away. “God can save, and God alone.”

Other points might be mentioned; but the above are enough to show that leprosy is a striking type of sin, and to suggest the reason why God should select this “sickness of sicknesses,” as Archbishop Trench calls it, “to testify against that out of which it and all other sicknesses grew, against sin, as not from Him and as grievous in His sight.” We shall take the text as teaching the great fact that *where God dwells there must be purity.* “Put out of the camp every leper. . . . in the midst whereof I dwell.” That God insists on purity as the condition of dwelling with us is the emphatic teaching of the whole

Bible. What care was manifested to have clean and perfect animals for sacrifice! The Psalmist asks: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” He replies: “He that hath clean hands and a pure heart,” i.e., whose life within and without is holy. His prayer is: “Create within me a clean heart.” The teaching of the New Testament is the same: “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.” “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” “The wisdom that is from above is first pure.” “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” The grand design of the atonement is described as being “to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” God insists on purity. Why?

I. God Himself is pure, and cannot associate with the impure.

Sin is hateful to Him. His very nature prohibits Him from being on terms of intimacy with any one living in sin. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” The God of the Bible is *the only pure God*. This being His character, purity must distinguish those with whom He associates. Character divides the world—unites or separates men. So it does with God and man. He can only dwell with the pure. Purity attracts Him to us. If discipline is lax, if sin is tolerated by the Church, or by the individual Christian, God departs. It is not the large Church, or the intelligent or the wealthy one, that attracts Him, but the pure one. As the lightning passes by the polished marble and the carved wood to touch the iron or steel, because there it finds something akin to itself, so God passes by those to visit and to dwell with the pure, because in them He finds a character akin to His own.

II. God will not, because He cannot, do any good to the impure.

It would answer no good purpose for Him to dwell with them. The essence of impurity is to love sin; to love sin is to hate God; hating God shuts the door against the possibility of improvement in character. God will

not dwell with man unless He can do him good. God with us is always equivalent to God blessing us. He wants us to be perfect as He Himself is perfect. This is His end in dwelling with us. Any one tolerating or living in sin would not appreciate the design of God and accept His blessing; and where He cannot bless, He will not come to dwell. Let us then "put out of the the camp every leper," everything that defileth; for the presence of God in our midst is of the utmost importance to us as His Church and people. *His presence is essential.*

1. *To our comfort as Churches and Christians.* What the shining sun is in nature His presence is with us—our brightness, our joy, etc.

2. *To our prosperity.* Without God in the midst the camp would have been helpless, would soon have become a prey to its enemies, and been broken up and scattered. God with His Church has

been in all ages the secret of its power and success. His presence is the life of the ministry and of all Christian work. Without Him we are, and we can do, nothing. How to secure His presence ought to be the all-absorbing problem. He tells us how: "Put out of the camp every leper." Let us put from the Church and from our hearts all that is offensive to Him, and let us do His commands, and He will come. He has said so, and He is waiting to bless. God is not with us as we should like: let us search and see if there be any leper in the camp, any sin tolerated, and by His help let us put it out.

If to tolerate the leper was so bad to the camp, what must it have been to be the leper himself! If sin in the Christian is so terrible, what must it be to the altogether sinful! Let us think of it, and seek pardon at once through Christ.—*David Lloyd.*

GOD DWELLING WITH HIS PEOPLE.

(Verse 3.)

"In the midst whereof I dwell."

I. God is present with His people.

He was with Israel as He was not with the neighbouring nations. The Tabernacle—the Shekinah, etc. He led, supported, defended them, etc. He is everywhere present *influentially*. See Psa. cxxxix. 1-10. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." "By Him all things consist." He is also present with His people *sympathetically*. They realise His presence, have fellowship with Him, etc. See Gen. xxviii. 16-17; Matt. xviii. 20; John xiv. 15-26; Ephes. iii. 16, 17; 1 John i. 3.

II. God is present "in the midst" of His people.

The Tabernacle was "in the midst" of the camp. Our Lord Jesus Christ is "in the midst" of His Church (Matt. xviii. 20). Like the sun in the midst of the planets.

1. *As the Centre of union.* The true union of the Church is not in oneness of doctrinal system or ecclesiastical polity, but in the vital fellowship of its members with the Lord.

2. *As the Source of blessing.* Life, light, growth, power, joy, beauty—all good flows from Him.

III. God's presence in the midst of His people should exert a great and blessed influence upon them.

It should prove:—

1. *A restraint from sin.* "The subject will do nothing unseemly in the presence of His prince, nor the child in the sight of his father. We are always in God's eye; He beholdeth all things that are done of us."

2. *An incentive to holiness.* It is thus that it is brought forward in this place. Because the Lord dwelt in the camp it was to be kept pure. See also Deut. xxiii. 14; Ezek. xliii. 7-9.

3. *An encouragement to duty.* The

presence of so gracious a Master should cheer and strengthen us.

4. *An assurance of support in the trials of life.* He marks the strain which the spirit feels, and he will either temper its severity, or increase the spiritual strength. "I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me."

5. *An assurance of victory in the conflicts of life.* "Through God we shall

do valiantly; for He shall tread down our enemies." See Psa. cxviii. 6-16; Rom. viii. 31-37.

6. *An assurance of perfect salvation.* "The Lord is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

FRAUD AND FORGIVENESS.

(Verses 5-8.)

In these verses we have another measure which was instituted to secure the sanctity of the congregation. Wrong done by one man against another is here legislated for in a spirit of just severity. Consider—

I. The sin of fraud.

"When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit," etc. *Lit.*—"Commit one of all the transgressions of man." *Keil and Del.* "Do one of the sins of men,"—one of the sins occurring amongst men. The reference is to sins of dishonesty or fraud. Fraud is here represented—

1. *As assuming many forms.* "Any sin that men commit." "One of all the transgressions of man." Our text is supplementary to the law on this matter as stated in Leviticus vi. 2, 3, and there various forms of this sin are stated. (1) Fraud in the matter of goods entrusted to the keeping of another. (2) In business transactions. (3) In seizing by force that which belongs to another. (4) In wronging another by means of deceit. (5) In the finder of lost property injuring the loser by falsehood. And in our own age fraud assumes many forms, and is widely prevalent. The employer who does not pay just wages to those in his service is guilty of it. (Prov. xxii. 16; Isa. iii. 14, 15; Colos. iv. 1; Isa. v. 4.) So also is the servant or workman who squanders the time for which his employer pays him; in so doing he defrauds his employer. The trader who takes an unfair advantage

of his customer, which he calls by some specious name, *e.g.*, "practice of the trade," etc.; the broker or speculator or manager who induces persons to invest their money in unreliable or doubtful enterprizes; the person who contracts a debt without the sincere intention and reasonable prospect of paying it—all these, and others, are guilty of fraud. (*a*)

2. *As a wrong done to God.* "To do a trespass against the Lord." *Keil and Del.*: "To commit unfaithfulness against Jehovah." He who is guilty of any act of fraud against his neighbour commits sin against God. All sin is against Him. When Joseph was tempted to sin against Potiphar, his master, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And David after he had committed the blackest injuries against Uriah the Hittite and others, when brought to repentance cried, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned; and done evil in Thy sight." As viewed in their social relations, he was deeply sensible of the greatness of his crimes; but so overwhelming was his sense of their enormity as committed against God, as to render the former view of them comparatively unimportant. (*b*) How grievous a thing, then, is dishonesty of any kind! Let us strive to be utterly free from it. (1 Thess. iv. 6.) Let us cultivate the most thorough uprightness in all our relations and dealings with each other.

II. The conditions of its forgiveness.

1. *Consciousness of guilt.* "The

expression, 'that person be guilty,' does not merely refer to his actual criminality; but to his consciousness of guilt respecting it: for this case must be distinguished from that of a person detected in dishonesty which he attempted to conceal."—*Scott*. Without the consciousness of guilt the other conditions of forgiveness could not be truly complied with.

2. *Confession*. "Then they shall confess their sin which they have done." This is an essential condition of forgiveness. (Psa. xxxii. 5; Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9.) To be of any avail confession must be sincere, must proceed from the heart. It is the natural expression of penitence. Where true penitence is, hearty confession will be welcomed as a relief, not shunned as a burden or regarded as an exaction. And without true penitence forgiveness of sin is a crime, an injury to society and even to the offender himself. Sincere penitence must utter itself in confession. Such confession is not the wail of despair, but the cry of sorrow and of hope. In itself it relieves the burdened and troubled soul, and it leads to the joy and peace of forgiveness. (*c*)

3. *Restitution*. "And He shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, to the priest." Restitution is an act of justice by which we restore to another that of which we have deprived him, or make him adequate compensation for the same. In this law it is enacted that the sum of which any one has been defrauded shall be restored, with the addition of one-fifth of its value. Restitution is essential to remission of sin; for where restitution is not made it is evident that sincere repentance is absent. See Ezek. xviii. 7, 9, 12, 13, xxxiii. 15. The true penitent will find it an unspeakable relief if he is able in any degree to repair the wrong which he has done. There was no ex-

emption or escape from this law. If the person defrauded were deceased, restitution must be made to his kinsman (Heb. Goël); and if there were no kinsman, to the priest as the representative of Jehovah. The priests were the Lord's receivers. In every case the property which was dishonestly acquired must be given up, restitution must be made, or the sin would not be forgiven. And this is still true. If we have acquired anything by dishonest means let us make full and speedy restitution for the same, even if by so doing we should be reduced to utter penury. Better extreme poverty in our circumstances with a clear conscience and an approving God, than the greatest wealth with a guilty conscience and a condemning God. "What is not our property will never be our profit." And restitution should be made promptly. Every minute of unnecessary delay increases the guilt of the wrong-doer. (*d*)

4. *Sacrifice*. In addition to making restitution the offender was commanded to offer "the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him." He who was guilty of fraud wronged not only his fellow-man, but God also; and therefore, in order that he might be forgiven, he must draw near to God with a sacrifice, and so make atonement for his sin. The ram was for the "trespass-offering," which differed from the sin-offering. In each offering the victim was a ram; but "the sin-offering looked more to the guilt of the sin done, irrespective of its consequences, while the trespass-offering looked to the evil consequences of sin, either against the service of God or against man, and to the duty of atonement, as far as atonement was possible." This arrangement would tend to set forth the great evil of sin as an offence to God Himself. It would also meet a great need of the penitent heart, which cries out for atonement for its sin. When all these things were accomplished the offender was held to be cleared from the guilt of his offence, as is stated in ver. 8—

"whereby an atonement shall be made for him," Lit. "which shall clear him of guilt as to it," i.e., as to the trespass. For us the One Offering has been made which perfects all others. And if we have wronged or defrauded any one, and are conscious of our guilt, we have but to make confession and restitution for the same, with faith in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, and full forgiveness will be ours.

Conclusion.

1. *Let those who have injured others make speedy and full confession and restitution.*

2. *Let us all cultivate the most thorough integrity and uprightness in our whole life and conduct.* "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The rules which God has given us forbid every wish, much more every attempt, to defraud, or deceive our neighbour. They render it highly criminal for the seller to take the smallest advantage of the ignorance, inexperience, or simplicity of his customers; or to conceal any defect which he may have discovered in the article of which he wishes to dispose. They render it equally criminal for the buyer to wish or attempt to take any advantage of the seller, either by exaggerating the defects of his merchandise, or by falsely pretending that he does not wish to purchase. They render it highly criminal for any one to contract debts, when he has no sufficient reason to believe that he shall be able to discharge them; or to persuade another to become responsible for his debts, when he has reason to suspect that his sponsor will in consequence suffer loss. In a word, they require us to put ourselves in the place of our neighbour, to be as willing to defraud him as to be defrauded ourselves; to be as careful of his property and interest, as of our own; to think no more of enriching ourselves at his expense, than we should think of robbing our left hand with our right. They require us, in all our transactions, to act as we should do if our fellow creatures could see our hearts; for though they cannot see them, yet God can, and does see them; He is both witness and judge between us and our neighbour in every transaction, and surely His eye ought to be as effectual in regulating our conduct as would the eye of our fellow creatures, could they, like Him, search the heart. . . . These rules evidently forbid us to take any advantage of the necessities or imprudence of those whom we employ, and require us to give them a prompt and adequate compensation for their services; and on the other hand, they make it the duty of all who are employed, to be as faithful to the interests of their employers as to their own, and to avoid defrauding them of any portion of their time by idleness, or of their property by negligence, as they would avoid theft or robbery.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(b) All sin is against God. There are some sins which are exclusively against God; there are others which are against man, but no sin

can be exclusively against man. This point is fraught with the most profound significance. Let us put it in this form: *Whoever sins against man sins against God.* Then how sacred are all human interests! How solemn are all human relations! You cannot harm a widow's child without sinning against God; you cannot sneer at a good man without touching the sensibilities of your heavenly Father; you cannot injure your wife or husband or friend without, in the degree of that injury, insulting Him who is the Creator and Redeemer of human kind. Let it be known then, in all the breadth and force of its significance, that every blow struck against humanity is a blow struck against God! It will be a token of solid progress when man has more respect for man. We have held manhood too cheaply. We have not sufficiently pondered the great fact that every man sustains a vital relation to the great Creator of all life, and that everything which appertains to man has also an immediate relation to God. Would that we could thunder these doctrines into the ear of all despotism; they would make the throne of tyranny tremble at its foundations; they would blanch every tyrant's cheek, and wither the power of every despot. This they will assuredly attain. As Christianity is developed, the true feeling of Christianity will be more and more understood; and they who once saw no image higher than human on the countenance of mankind, shall on that same countenance see the image and superscription of Him who is infinite in pity and infinite in love.—*Jos. Parker, D.D.*

(c) The confession of sin against a brother is a reasonable condition of receiving a brother's forgiveness. The confession of sin to God is of the essence of repentance and faith, and this does not interfere with the grand truth that a man is justified by faith only. It is a sign that momentous spiritual changes are going on in a man when he can bring his sin into the presence of the Holy God, and see it in the light of perfect law and perfect sacrifice. The effort to do so tears up the roots of evil desire, and crucifies the world with its affections. It is the sublime peculiarity of Christianity that a sinner can take his sins to God and

find mercy, even amid the burning light of that most Holy Presence. More than this, one man may help another to make this confession, to see himself and judge of himself more accurately than he would do, in the isolation and awfulness of his own repentance. The danger of self-deceit and self-flattery is great. The experience of the devout and impartial Christian who knows something of human nature, and has realised the full assurance of faith, may be found of the greatest avail in the struggle of the soul heavenwards. All Churches and all Christians admit this great advantage.—*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*

(d) He must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. In other words, he must make restitution to every one whom he has injured, or defrauded, so far as he can recollect who they are—this is indispensable. There is no repentance, and, of course, no forgiveness without it. How can a man repent of iniquity, who still retains the wages of iniquity? It is impossible. If he feels any sorrow, it is occasioned, not by hatred of his sin, but by fear of the consequences. Restitution, then, must be made, or the offender must perish. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, says our Saviour, and there rememberest that thy brother has aught against thee, that is, any reason to complain of thee, go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. The altar was then the place to which the worshippers of God brought their thank-offerings, gifts, and sacrifices for sin. Christ, we are told, is now our altar, and

to this altar we must bring our prayers, our praises, our services. But he plainly intimates that he will accept no gift of us, receive no thanks from us, listen to none of our prayers, so long as we neglect to make satisfaction to those whom we have injured. And in vain shall we attempt to atone for neglecting this duty, by performing others, by contributing to the promotion of religious objects, or by liberality to the poor; for God has said, I hate robbery for burnt offering; that is, I hate, I will not receive an offering, which was unjustly acquired. There is, then, no way but to make restitution; and this every real Christian will make to the utmost of his ability. Agreeably, we hear Zaccheus, the publican, saying as soon as he became a Christian, "If I have wronged any man, I restore him fourfold." I am aware that this is a most disagreeable duty. Nothing can be harder, or more painful to our proud hearts. But it will be far easier to perform it, than to suffer the consequences of neglecting it. If it is not performed, our souls must perish, as sure as the Word of God is true; and in consequence of indulging a false shame, we shall be overwhelmed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even as it respects our interest in this world only, we had better, far better, put a blazing fire-brand into the midst of our possessions, than retain among them the smallest particle of gain, which was not fairly obtained; for it will bring the curse of God upon us, and upon all the works of our hands.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY.

(Verses 9, 10.)

In the preceding verses it was enacted that, in case of fraud, restitution should be made to the injured person, and, if he were deceased, to his Goël, and, if there were no Goël, to the priest, who should offer the trespass offering for the wrong-doer. The restitution in this case belonged to the priest. And in these verses other perquisites of the officiating priests are mentioned. In this and other ways provision was made for their temporal support. It was of the first importance that such provision should be made; for the proper discharge of their duties precluded them from engaging in the ordinary activities of life. "At first," says Professor Plumtre, "the small number of the priests must have made the work almost unintermittent, and even when the

system of rotation had been adopted, the periodical absences from home could not fail to be disturbing and injurious, had they been dependent on their own labours. The serenity of the priestly character would have been disturbed had they had to look for support to the lower industries. It may have been intended that their time, when not liturgically employed, should be given to the study of the Law, or to instructing others in it. On these grounds, therefore, a distinct provision was made for them. This consisted (1) Of one-tenth of the tithes which the people paid to the Levites, one per cent., *i.e.*, on the whole produce of the country (Numb. xviii. 26-28). (2) Of a special tithe every third year (Deut. xiv. 28, xxvi. 12). (3) Of the redemption money paid at

the fixed rate of five shekels a head, for the first-born of man or beast (Num. xviii. 14-19). (4) Of the redemption money paid in like manner for men or things specially dedicated to the Lord (Lev. xxvii). (5) Of spoil, captives, cattle, and the like, taken in war (Num. xxxi. 25-47). (6) Of what may be described as the perquisites of their sacrificial functions, the shew-bread, the flesh of the burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, trespass-offerings (Num. xviii. 8-14; Lev. vi. 26, 29; vii. 6-10), and, in particular, the heave-shoulder and wave-breast (Lev. x. 12-15). (7) Of an undefined amount of the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil (Ex. xxiii. 19; Lev. ii. 14; Deut. xxi. 1-10). (8) On their settlement in Canaan the priestly families had thirteen cities assigned them, with "suburbs" or pasture grounds for their flocks (Josh. xxi. 13-19). These provisions were obviously intended to secure the religion of Israel against the dangers of a caste of pauper priests, needy and dependent, and unable to bear their witness to the true faith. They were, on the other hand, as far as possible removed from the condition of a wealthy order." In the foregoing sources of emolument, only the chief ones are given. The "offering" mentioned in the text is given in the margin as "heave-offering." The Hebrew is *הַרִּיחָה* an oblation, used here, says Fuerst, "of holy gifts generally." "The reference is to dedicatory offerings, first-fruits, and such like."—*Keil and Del.* These were to be the property of the officiating priests. These arrangements suggest the obligation of the Church to adequately support its ministry. We rest this obligation—

I. On the ground of honesty.

The physician and the solicitor are paid, and that handsomely, for their attention and counsel, as a matter of duty. The Christian minister has equally a claim that his services shall be remunerated by those who have the benefit of them. Yet professedly Christian people are far less conscientious in

paying for ministerial than they are for legal and medical services. The testimony of our Lord and of His apostles as to this obligation is unmistakably clear. (See Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7-14; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.) (a)

II. On the ground of interest.

The Christian congregation that does not adequately support its minister is not wisely mindful of its own best interests.

1. *The services of the true minister of Christ are of the greatest benefit to the Church and to the world.* His ministry tends to quicken thought on the most important and sublime subjects, to educate the conscience aright, to arouse the will to true and earnest action, and to lead the soul to the great Source of life and light.

2. *The adequate maintenance of the ministry is indispensable to its efficiency.* When his mind is harassed with temporal anxieties, or when much of his time is occupied with matters not pertaining to his ministry, in order to provide for the wants of his family, the minister is prevented from rendering the highest service of which he is capable. The ministry should be the great business of his life, and his mind should be free to prosecute it. Hence—

3. *If Christians consult their own interests they will see to it that their ministers are adequately maintained.* The money which is so spent will prove a most remunerative investment. (b)

Conclusion.

1. *Let Churches recognise their interest and heartily do their duty in this respect.*

2. *Let ministers recognise the importance of their duties, and endeavour to faithfully perform them.* "It is great reason that he which looketh for his hire should do his work; and that he which intendeth to live of the Gospel of Christ, should preach to others the Gospel of Christ." Let us strive to be "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," etc. (Matt. xiii. 52). "Study to show thyself approved unto God," etc. (2 Tim. ii. 15).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) No true minister will ever preach with an eye to secular results. All mercenary considerations will be borne down and engulfed by the ever-deepening current of spiritual sympathies and aims. His main purpose will be not to acquire wealth, but to win souls. Still, in common with all men, he has his physical and domestic wants. Food, raiment, and a home, are as necessary to his existence as to that of any man; and according to the present arrangements of society, these are only supplied by money. Whence is he to receive this? As a general rule, it comes only as the reward of labour. He labours. The office of a true minister is no sinecure; there is no work so arduous as his; it is the labour, not of limbs, but of brain and heart; it is a constant draw upon the very fountains of nervous energy. Nor is there any work so useful to society. In the reason of things, therefore, has any worker a stronger claim to secular support than he? If his labour is the most arduous and the most useful, ought it not to secure the most ample secular returns? Paul recognises and enforces this natural and common-sense claim. (1 Cor. ix. 7, 9, 11, 14.)

There are men who receive and expect large services from their minister, and who make little or no return. For a paltry pound or two per annum, he must preach to them thrice per week, pay them frequent pastoral visits, or else they set up their complaints against him, and seek to spread a spirit of dissatisfaction through his sphere. There are families in connection with congregations who spend more on perfumery, or on toys for their children, than to support the man who is giving the best energies of his cultivated mind to save their souls. A man takes a pew in a church, pays his five or six pounds per annum,—a less sum than he pays his scullery-maid,—and for that he expects twelve months' preaching, and great pastoral attention. What is still worse—

still more unreasonable, he regards the paltry sum he subscribes rather as a *charity* than a debt. Charity, indeed! Call the money you pay to your grocer, draper, physician, or landlord, charity; but in the name of all that is true in reason and justice, don't call what you tender to the man to whom you owe your best ideas, your holiest impressions—who gives to you the choicest products of his educated and sanctified intellect, *charity*. It is he that shows charity, not you; your gold is a miserable compensation for the results of his sweating brain and ever-anxious heart.—*D. Thomas, D.D.*

(b) As the Church dependeth upon them for their allowance, so they depend upon her for their maintenance. Thus the Pastor and the people do feed one another, as a flock of sheep nourisheth the shepherd, who eateth the milk of them, and clotheth himself with the wool of them; and again the shepherd coucheth them into green pastures, and leadeth them by the still waters. The people feed him with the bread of this life; he feedeth them with the bread of everlasting life. They minister to him in carnal things; he to them in spiritual things. They cannot lack him in regard of their souls; he cannot be without them in regard of his body. Thus then they do feed one another, or at least ought to do. If he receive food of them, and give none unto them again, he robbeth them of their goods, and murdereth their souls. If they on the other side receive food of him, so that they be taught of him, and yet make him not partaker of a part of their goods, they rob him, and cause him to depart from them, and so become murderers of their own souls, as if they did lay violent hands upon themselves, or rather as if they did famish themselves by refusing bread provided for them; inasmuch as "where vision ceaseth, there people perish." (Prov. xxix. 18.)—*W. Attersoll.*

THE TRIAL OF THE SUSPECTED WIFE

(Verses 11-31.)

We have here another law intended to secure the sanctity of the Israelites, by maintaining fidelity in conjugal relations, and removing even the suspicion of adultery from amongst them. "The chastity of females," says Dean Milman, "was guarded by statutes, which, however severe and cruel according to modern notions, were wise and merciful in that state of society. Poems and travels have familiarised us with the horrible atrocities committed by the blind jealousy of Eastern husbands.

By substituting a judicial process for the wild and hurried justice of the offended party, the guilty suffered a death, probably, less inhuman; the innocent might escape. The convicted adulterer and adulteress were stoned to death. Even the incontinence of a female before marriage, if detected at the time of her nuptials, which was almost inevitable, underwent the same penalty with that of the adulteress. Where the case was not clear, the female suspected of infidelity might be

summoned to a most awful ordeal. She was to be acquitted or condemned by God Himself, whose actual interposition was promised by His daring law-giver. . . . What guilty woman, if she had courage to confront, would have the command of countenance, firmness and resolution, to go through all this slow, searching, and terrific the process, and finally expose herself to shame and agony, far worse than death? No doubt, cases where this trial was undergone were rare; yet the confidence of the legislator in the Divine interference can hardly be questioned; for had such an institution fallen into contempt by its failure in any one instance, his whole law and religion would have been shaken to its foundation." "We do not read of any instance in which this ordeal was resorted to; a fact which may be explained either (with the Jews) as a proof of its efficacy, since the guilty could not be brought to face its terrors at all, and avoided them by confession; or more probably by the licence of divorce tolerated by the law of Moses. Since a husband could put away his wife at pleasure, a jealous man would naturally prefer to take this course with a suspected wife rather than to call public attention to his own shame by having recourse to the trial of jealousy. The Talmud states that the trial lapsed into disuse forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and that because the crime of adultery was so common amongst men that God would no longer inflict the curses here named upon women (cf. Hos. iv. 14).—*Speaker's Commentary*.

A critical examination and exposition of the details of the process of trial will be found in Keil and Del., *in loco*. Let us consider the principal moral truths which are here illustrated.

I. Confidence in conjugal relations is of great importance.

This awful ordeal was instituted for cases where this confidence was lost, and the proof of guilt was lacking. Suspicion and jealousy are terrible evils. "Suspicion," says Babington, "is the cut-throat and poison of all love and

friendship." And in proportion to the intensity of the love will be the anguish of suspicion in respect to the object of the love.

"Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;

Where little fear grows great, great love is there." *Shakespeare*.

"Jealousy, each other passion's calm,
To thee, thou conflagration of the soul!
Thou king of torments! thou grand counterpoise

For all the transports beauty can inspire." *Young*.

And Hannah More:

"O, jealousy,
Thou ugliest fiend of hell! thy deadly
venom

Preys on my vitals, turns the healthful hue
Of my fresh cheek to haggard sallowness,
And drinks my spirit up." (a)

"Jealousy," says Solomon, "is the rage of a man." "Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, a most vehement flame." This dread ordeal was intended as a remedy for suspicion and jealousy. And no one can examine it without perceiving that, if it was severe, it was also calculated to be thoroughly effective. See how searching, solemn, and stern it is.

1. *The whole trial was to take place in the sight of God* (ver. 16).

2. *The dread appeal was made to the Omniscient and Almighty* (ver. 21).

3. *The appeal was weighted by the most terrible imprecations* (vers. 21, 22).

4. *It was solemnly declared in the law that if the woman were guilty these imprecations would be fulfilled* (ver. 27).

5. *The appeal was to be solemnly ratified by the suspected woman*. "The woman shall say, Amen, Amen." "Twice," says Trapp; "to show the fervency of her zeal, the innocence of her cause, the uprightness of her conscience, and the purity of her heart." Surely, if any suspected wife went through so solemn and terrible an ordeal, the effect would be completely to clear the mind of her husband from the least taint of suspicion, and to restore the brightness of her reputation. The sternness of this ordeal for the removal of suspicion impressively sets forth the importance of con-

fidence between husband and wife. Destroy this confidence; and what ought to be one of the holiest and most lasting bonds is snapped asunder, the helpfulness and peace of the family are banished for ever, and, if the evil prevail to any considerable extent, the foundations of the civil commonwealth will be gradually but certainly undermined.

II. Adultery is a sin of the greatest enormity.

This dreadful ordeal, which was intended to prevent it, shows how great was its heinousness in the Divine estimation. This is expressed—

1. *In the abasement of the suspected woman.* The “barley meal” of which the offering was composed, the “earthen vessel” which contained the water, and “the dust” that was put into the water, indicate a state of deep humiliation and disgrace. The absence from the offering of oil, the symbol of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and of frankincense, the symbol of prayer, also proclaimed her questionable repute and the suspicion with which she was regarded. In like manner the “uncovering of the woman’s head” was indicative of the loss of woman’s best ornament, chastity and fidelity in the marriage relation.

2. *In the terrible punishment which came upon the guilty.* “If she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.”—Keil and Del. translate, “her hip vanish.” And Adam Clarke: “her thigh fall.” This ordeal was made so terrible that the dread of it might effectually prevent the wives in Israel from the least violation of their fidelity to their husbands. It remains as an impressive proclamation of the utter abhorrence with which God regards the sin of adultery. It is a sin against God; it inflicts the most grievous and intolerable injury upon the husband; it is an unmitigated blight and bane

upon the family; and it is a wrong to society generally. The most terrible condemnations are pronounced upon it in the Sacred Word. (See Lev. xx. 10; Mal. iii. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Heb. xiii. 4.)

III. The punishment of sin is closely related to the sin itself.

“It cannot be determined with any certainty what was the nature of the disease threatened in this curse. . . . At any rate, the idea of the curse is this: *Δι ὧν γὰρ ἡ ἀμαρτία διὰ τούτων ἡ τιμωρία* (‘the punishment shall come from the same source as the sin,’ *Theodoret*). The punishment was to answer exactly to the crime, and to fall upon those bodily organs which had been the instruments of the woman’s sin, viz., the organs of child-bearing.”—*Keil and Del.* The punishment came in those portions of her body which she had abused. “David sinned in committing adultery with the wife of Uriah, his faithful servant, and destroyed him with the sword of the Ammonites; he is paid home, and punished in his own kind; for God, by way of rewarding him and serving him as he had served others, as a just judge, doth raise up evil against him out of his own house. His own sons break out into the same sins, and he kindleth such a fire in his own family, that they rise up against him, and one against another. Absalom spreadeth a tent, and lieth with his father’s concubines, in the sight of all Israel. Ammon deflowereth his sister Tamar; to revenge this, Absalom killeth his own brother.”—*Attersoll.* (See Judg. i. 6-7; Esth. vii. 10; Matt. vii. 1-2.) “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” (b)

IV. God will bring to light the secret sins of men.

If the suspected woman were guilty, after this ordeal her guilt would be made manifest. All sins are known unto Him. “For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of

iniquity may hide themselves." "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Sometimes hidden sins are strangely discovered in this life and world. (c). The great day will reveal all. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." In that day the dark secrets of evil will be all brought to light.

V. God will assuredly vindicate the innocent who have suffered from suspicion or slander.

In this case the vindication was most complete. "If the woman be not defiled, but be clean: then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed." "If not guilty after such a trial," says Adam Clarke, "she had great honour; and, according to the rabbins, became strong,

healthy, and fruitful; for if she was before barren, she now began to bear children; if before she had only daughters, she now began to have sons; if before she had hard travail, she now had easy; in a word, she was blessed in her body, her soul, and her substance." Thus to the innocent there was no terror in this stern ordeal. It was rather a blessing to them, if by any means they had come to be regarded with suspicion by their husbands; for by means of it such suspicions would be removed, and their fidelity and honour vindicated and exalted. And God will, sooner or later, splendidly vindicate all who suffer from misrepresentation, slander, or false accusation.

Conclusion.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," etc. Let us seek by the grace of God to be ready for that great and awful tribunal.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Jealousy is the bane and poison of marriage, and maketh that sociable life to be uncomfortable, and mingleth it with worse than gall and wormwood. Jealousy, therefore, is a grief of mind, arising from hence, that another is judged to enjoy that which we desire to have wholly and properly as our own, and none beside us to possess any part with us. Here, then, we cannot abide any community, but hate it as our enemy and the right cause of this jealousy. Or we may describe it otherwise on this manner: It is an affection proceeding from fear to have that communicated to another, which we challenge and covet to retain as peculiar and proper to ourselves alone. From hence it appeareth, farther, what the nature of jealousy is, to wit, that it is mixed and compounded, partly of love, partly of fear, and partly of anger. Of love, which admitteth no fellow-partner in the thing he loveth: for as the king will suffer no companion to be equal unto him, or partaker with him in his kingdom, so will the husband suffer no co-rival to mate him in his love. Of fear, lest another enjoy the use of that which we cannot abide or suffer he should enjoy. Of anger, whereby it cometh to pass, that he is ready to break out to seek revenge and punishment upon him that hath offended him that way.—*W. Attersoll*.

Yet is there one more cursed than they all,
That canker worm, that monster, Jealousy,
Which eats the heart and feeds upon the gall,
Turning all love's delight to misery,
Through fear of losing his felicity.

Nor ever is he wont on aught to feed

But toads and frogs (his pasture poisonous),
Which, in his cold complexion, do breed

A filthy blood, or humour rancorous,
Matter of doubt and dread suspicious,
That doth with cureless care consume the heart,

Corrupt the stomach with gall vicious,
Cross-cuts the liver with eternal smart,
And doth transfix the soul with death's eternal dart.

Edmund Spenser.

(b) The punishment of sin is not an arbitrary infliction, but it is a necessary law. Penalty is not a direct interference, but a genuine child of the transgression. We receive the things that we have done. There is a dreadful coercion in our own iniquities. There is an inevitable congruity between the deed and its consequences. There is an awful germ of identity in the seed and in the fruit. We recognise the sown wind when we are reaping the harvest whirlwind. We feel that it is we who have winged the very arrows that eat into our hearts like fire. It needs no gathered lightnings—no Divine intervention—no miraculous messenger to avenge in us God's violated laws; they avenge themselves. . . . Take disease as one form of the working of this inevitable law—not always, of course, the direct result of sin; yet how much of disease is directly due to dirt, neglect, folly, ignorance—the infected blood, the inherited instincts of this sad world. But are there not some diseases, and those the most terrible which I have known, which do spring directly, im-

mediately, exclusively, solely, from violence of God's law? Is not madness very often such a disease? Is there not at this moment many a degraded lunatic who never would have been such but for repeated transgressions of God's known will? Is there not in the very life-blood of millions, a hereditary taint blighting the healthy, poisoning, as with a fury's breath, the flower of their happiness, and breaking out afresh in new generations, which has its sole source and origin in uncleanness? Is there not, too, an executioner of justice which God has told off to wait upon drunkenness, which would cease if drunkenness ceased to exist? It is God's warning against that fearful intemperance against which senates will not fight, and against which they who love their fellows fight as yet in vain.—*F. W. Farrer, D.D.*

(c) When Dr. Donne, afterwards Dean of St. Paul's, took possession of the first living he ever had, he walked into the churchyard as the sexton was digging a grave; and on his throwing up a skull, the doctor took it into his hands to indulge in serious contemplation. On look-

ing at it, he found a headless nail sticking in the temple, which he secretly drew out, and wrapped in the corner of his handkerchief. He then asked the grave-digger, whether he knew whose skull it was? He said he did; adding, it had been a man's who kept a brandy shop; a drunken fellow, who, one night, having taken two quarts of ardent spirits, was found dead in his bed the next morning. "Had he a wife?" "Yes." "Is she living?" "Yes." "What character does she bear?" "A very good one; only her neighbours reflect on her because she married the day after her husband was buried." This was enough for the doctor, who, in the course of visiting his parishioners, called on her; he asked her several questions, and, among others, of what sickness her husband died. She giving him the same account, he suddenly opened the handkerchief, and cried, in an authoritative voice, "Woman, do you know this nail?" She was struck with horror at the unexpected question, instantly acknowledged that she had murdered her husband; and was afterwards tried and executed.—*Biblical Museum.*

HINTS ON THE LAW OF JEALOUSIES.

(Verse 29.)

Describe trial by ordeal. This existed among all primitive nations, and modern ones that are yet in a primitive state. Nations have their infancy; this belongs to that state in their existence. Israel had seen this in Egypt. God permits them to use it; only stipulating that water only should be used, so that no innocent one should suffer, and that all should see that the guilty was detected by Him. Why should He permit this?

1. To show the importance He attaches to domestic morality.

2. To teach them that He was looking on and knowing their most secret sins.

3. To train them to cultivate a tender conscience, and to acknowledge its authority.

4. To restore confidence between husband and wife where it was wrongly shaken.

5. Though this custom is done away with, God is still the same, and will bring all secret sin into the light.—*David Lloyd.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOW OF THE NAZARITE, OR ACCEPTABLE CONSECRATION TO GOD.

(Verses 1-8.)

"The previous chapter has provided for the exclusion from the pale of God's people of certain forms of guilt and defilement. The present one offers an opening to that zeal for God which, not content with observing what is obligatory, seeks for higher and stricter modes of self-dedication. Thus the law of the Nazarite is appropriately added to other enactments which concern the

sanctity of the holy nation. That sanctity found its highest expression in the Nazarite vow, which was the voluntary adoption for a time of obligations resembling, and indeed in some particulars exceeding, those under which the priests were placed."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Nazarite, or more properly, Nazirite (Heb. נָזִיר from נָזַר *to separate*), signifies

a separated one, then ; one consecrated, especially by a vow.

From the mode in which the law is introduced in ver. 2, it is evident that Nazaritism was not a new institution, but was already familiar to the people. Moses "appears to have done no more than ordain such regulations for the vow of the Nazarite of days, as brought it under the cognizance of the priest, and into harmony with the general system of religious observance. It is doubted, in regard to Nazaritism in general, whether it was of native or foreign origin. . . . Winer justly observes that the points of resemblance between the Nazarite vow and heathen customs are too fragmentary and indefinite to furnish a safe foundation for an argument in favour of a foreign origin for the former."

Nazarites were of two kinds, and were styled respectively, "Nazarites of days," and "perpetual Nazarites." The former took the vow only for a limited and specified time. The Sacred Scriptures are silent as to the length of time for which the vow was taken. "According to *Nazir*, the usual time was thirty days, but double vows for sixty days, and treble vows for a hundred days, were sometimes made." Of perpetual Nazarites, three are mentioned in the Scriptures : Sampson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. The laws which are laid down in this chapter apply to those who were Nazarites for a limited period only, not to those who were Nazarites for life.

On the moral significance of Nazaritism we cannot do better than transcribe the remarks of the Rev. S. Clark, M.A., in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*. "The meaning of the Nazarite vow has been regarded in different lights. Some consider it as a symbolical expression of the Divine nature working in man, and deny that it involved anything of a strictly ascetic character ; others see in it the principle of stoicism, and imagine that it was intended to cultivate, and bear witness for, the sovereignty of the will over the lower tendencies of human nature : while

some regard it wholly in the light of the sacrifice of the person to God . . . Philo has taken the deeper view of the subject. According to him the Nazarite did not sacrifice merely his possessions, but his person, and the act of sacrifice was to be performed in the completest manner. The outward observances enjoined upon him were to be the genuine expressions of his spiritual devotion. To represent spotless purity within, he was to shun defilement from the dead, at the expense even of the obligation of the closest family ties. As no spiritual state or act can be signified by any single symbol, he was to identify himself with each one of the three victims which he had to offer as often as he broke his vow by accidental pollution, or when the period of his vow came to an end. He was to realise in himself the ideas of the whole burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the peace-offering. That no mistake might be made in regard to the three sacrifices being shadows of one and the same substance, it was ordained that the victims should be individuals of one and the same species of animal. The shorn hair was put on the fire of the altar in order that, although the Divine law did not permit the offering of human blood, something might be offered up actually a portion of his own person . . . That the Nazarite vow was essentially a sacrifice of the person to the Lord is obviously in accordance with the terms of the Law (Num. vi. 2). In the old dispensation it may have answered to that 'living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,' which the believer is now called upon to make. As the Nazarite was a witness for the straitness of the Law, as distinguished from the freedom of the Gospel, his sacrifice of himself was submission to the letter of a rule. Its outward manifestations were restraints and eccentricities. The man was separated from his brethren that he might be peculiarly devoted to the Lord. This was consistent with the purpose of Divine wisdom for the time for which it was

ordained. Wisdom, we are told, was justified of her child in the life of the great Nazarite who preached the baptism of repentance when the Law was about to give way to the Gospel. Amongst those born of women, no greater than he had arisen, 'but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' The sacrifice which the believer now makes of himself is not to cut him off from his brethren, but to unite him more closely with them; not to subject him to an outward bond, but to confirm him in the liberty with which Christ has made him free. It is not without significance that wine under the Law was strictly forbidden to the priest who was engaged in the service of the sanctuary, and to the few whom the Nazarite vow bound to the special service of the Lord; while in the Church of Christ it is consecrated for the use of every believer to whom the command has come, 'drink ye all of this.' Confining our attention to the first eight verses, we have in them an illustration of acceptable consecration to God. *Acceptable personal consecration to God is characterised by—*

I. Voluntariness.

The self-consecration of the Nazarite was entirely spontaneous. It is true that Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, were dedicated to the Lord as perpetual Nazarites by their parents previous to their birth. But as a rule, the vow was voluntarily assumed. In the legislation recorded in this chapter it is regarded as the free act of the individual. Our self-consecration to God must be willing and hearty, or it will not be accepted by Him. The strictest obedience, which is begotten of fear; the most careful performance of religious duties, which is not hearty; the most diligent service, which is not free, is regarded as worthless in the sight of God. To be accepted by God, we must "serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind." The service of the slave or of the hireling, He rejects; but the free consecration of the heart and life to Him is an

offering with which He is well pleased (a).

II. Completeness.

The Nazarite dedicated himself wholly to God. This is symbolised especially by the uncut hair, which is spoken of in verse 7 as "the diadem of God upon his head." "The consecration of the Nazarite culminated in his uncut hair. The free growth of the hair, unhindered by the hand of man, was 'the symbol of strength and abundant vitality' (cf. 2 Sam. xvi. 25, 26)." Hence in the Nazarite it proclaimed the fact that he had dedicated himself wholly, with all his powers, to the service of God. Our consecration to God must be unreserved to be acceptable. Divided allegiance is no allegiance. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Whole-heartedness is indispensable to true allegiance to any person or to any cause. Divided service God rejects. He claims us entirely. He requires our supreme affection. The throne of our being must be freely given to Him, or our consecration will not be accepted by Him. When our whole self is given to God, we shall keep back nothing else from Him. "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly," etc. (1 Thess. v. 23). (b)

III. Subordination of sensual enjoyments.

The Nazarite was to abstain entirely from wine and intoxicating drink. He was neither to eat nor to drink of anything prepared from the vine, "from the kernel even to the husk." This was to represent his abstinence from every gratification of the senses, which would in any way impair the holiness of his soul. This entire abstinence from the products of the vine is not a law for Christians. It is never represented as such in the Sacred Scriptures. The Nazarite was free to "drink wine" when the period of his separation was ended. But it is a law of the Christian life, that the sensual must ever and in all things be subordinated to the spiritual. Sensual appetites must not lord it over spiritual aspirations. Our

animal passions must be controlled by moral principles. Everything which tends to weaken or becloud our soul's vision, to blunt our susceptibility to spiritual impressions and impulses, to interrupt our conscious communion with God, or to deprive us of spiritual purity and power, we are bound to abstain from. "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

(c)

IV. Separation from all moral evil.

"Because the Nazarite was holy to the Lord during the whole period of his consecration, he was to approach no dead person during that time, not even to defile himself for his parents, or his brothers and sisters, when they died, according to the law laid down for the high priest in Lev. xxi. 11. Consequently, as a matter of course, he was

to guard most scrupulously against other defilements, not only like ordinary Israelites, but also like the priests."—*Keil and Del.* The people of God must "abstain from every form of evil." Jesus Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," even while he received sinners and ate with them. A similar separation is required from His followers. "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not anything unclean, and I will receive you," etc. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." By your consecration you are "holy unto the Lord," therefore shun utterly all sin whatsoever. (d)

Do these characteristics of acceptable personal consecration to God mark our lives?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ has distinguished the saints of all churches, and of all countries. They have acknowledged that they were not their own, but His. They have renounced, for His sake, all private interests, and all personal aims. They have lived, and worked, and suffered, and died for Him. They have been the slaves of Christ—His slaves, not because their spirit was crushed by a tyrannical authority which they had no power or courage to resist, but because His Divine majesty, His infinite love for them, and the glory of His personal perfection kindled their imagination, commanded the homage of their conscience, and won their hearts. They were His slaves, but they found in His service a larger freedom than they had known before they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Master; and, with the larger freedom, there came a fuller life and a nobler joy.

The act of consecration is an act of the will. It is a voluntary surrender of the life to Christ, a yielding to His claims as our rightful Owner. But His Ownership belongs to the moral and spiritual order, and is ultimately asserted in His personal ascendancy over the whole moral and spiritual life of those who are His. Consecration is an indispensable condition of holiness, for it is a free consent to belong to Christ, and not to ourselves; but where there is personal devotion to Christ, Christ is not merely accepted by the will as the Lord and Owner of life, He is enthroned

over all the forces of our moral and spiritual nature.—*R. W. Dale, D.D.*

(b) It is related of the missionary, Henry Martyn, that, when at college, "he never lost an hour;" but then every moment was spent in seeking honour for himself. When, however, he had obtained the highest honours, he was disappointed in finding that he had grasped a shadow. A friend told him one day that he ought to attend to his studies not to obtain the praise of men, but that he might be better fitted to promote the glory of God. He thought such a demand very strange, and when his sister spoke to him on the subject, and begged him to give his heart to God, he did not like to listen to her, because he felt that he would have to give up many things if he became religious. At length, however, a great change came over him—a change of heart; and he resolved to "seek first the kingdom of God." His prospects were every day becoming brighter and brighter; but the love of God had entered his heart, and he was enabled to conquer his ambition and love of fame. He became a minister of the Gospel, and was greatly esteemed for his learning and amiable manners. He began now, more than ever, to feel that he was not his own, and therefore that he must not live to himself; and although he might have risen to posts of distinction in his native land, he chose rather to be a missionary to the heathen. He sacrificed home, friendship, worldly comfort, health, earthly

love, and last of all, life itself, that he might tell the heathen of the true God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners; for, as he said, "he could not endure life if Jesus were not glorified." He left all that he might follow Jesus. He felt that it was what God required of him, and he acted in the spirit of his Divine Master, who gave Himself for the sins of the world.—*Sunday School Teacher.*

(c) Stimulants, like wine, inflame the senses, and through them set the imagination and feelings on fire; and the law of our spiritual being is that which begins with the flesh, sensualizes the spirit—whereas that which commences in the region of the spirit, spiritualizes the senses, in which it subsequently stirs emotion. But the misfortune is that men mistake this law of their emotions; and the fatal error is, when having found spiritual feelings existing in connection, and associated with fleshly sensations, men expect by the mere irritation of the emotions of the frame to reproduce those high and glorious feelings. . . . The worst case of all occurs in the department of the affections. That which begins in the heart ennobles the whole animal being, but that which begins in the inferior departments of our beings is the most entire degradation and sensualizing of the soul.

Wine is but a specimen of a class of stimulants. All that begins from *without* belongs to the same class. The stimulus may be afforded by almost any enjoyment of the senses. Drunkenness may come from anything wherein is excess; from over-indulgence in society, in pleasure, in music, and in the delight of listening to oratory, nay, even from the excitement of sermons and religious meetings. The prophet tells us of those who are drunken, and not with wine. . . . This is what we want: we want the vision of a calmer and simpler Beauty, to tranquillize us in the midst of artificial tastes—we want the draught of a purer spring to cool the flame of our excited life; we want, in other words the Spirit of the Life of Christ, simple, natural, with power to calm and soothe the feelings which it rouses: the fulness of the Spirit which can never intoxicate.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(d) Christ had His power in the fact that He carried the impression of His separateness from the world and His superiority to it. He was no ascetic, His separation no contrived and prescribed separation, but was only the more real and radical that it was the very instinct or first impulse of His character. He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me;" counting the bad kingdom to be only a paste-board affair, whose laws and ways were but a vain show, that He could not even so much as feel. This, now,

is what we want, such a fulness of Divine participation, that we shall not require to be always shutting off the world by prescribed denials, but shall draw off from it naturally, because we are not of it. A true Christian, one who is deep enough in the godly life to have his affinities with God, will infallibly become a separated being. The instinct of holiness will draw him apart into a singular, superior, hidden life with God.

It is not conformity that we want; it is not being able to beat the world in its own way, but it is to stand apart from it, and produce the impression of a separated life; this it is, and this only, that yields any proper sense of the true Christian power. It is not the being popular that makes one a help to religion, no holy man was ever truly a popular character. Even Christ Himself, bringing the Divine beauty into the world, profoundly disturbed the quiet of men by His very perfections. All really bad men, adhering to their sin, hated Him, and their animosity was finally raised to such a pitch, that they crucified Him. And what does He say, turning to His disciples, but this very thing, "The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you." We are certainly not to make a merit of being hated, for the worst and most wicked men can do that; as little are we to make a merit of popularity and being even with the world in its ways. There is no just mode of life, no true holiness, or fruit of holy living, if we do not carry the conviction, by our self-denial, our sobriety in the matter of show, and our withholding from all that indicates being under the world, that we are in a life separated to God. Therefore His great call is—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And there is a most profound philosophy in this. If we are to impress the world we must be separate from sinners, even as Christ our Master was, or at least, according to our human degree, as being in His Spirit. The great difficulty is, that we think to impress the world, standing on the world's own level and asking its approbation. We conform too easily and with too much appetite. We are all the while touching the unclean thing—bowing down to it, accepting its law, eager to be found approved in it. God therefore calls us away. Oh, that we could take our lesson here, and plan our life, order our pursuits, choose our relaxations, prepare our families, so as to be truly with Christ, and so, in fact, that we ourselves can say, each for himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

THE INVOLUNTARY DEFILEMENT OF THE NAZARITE, OR SIN IN THE CONSECRATED.

(Verses 9-12.)

Provision is here made for cases in which the Nazarite involuntarily contracted defilement, by reason of a person dying suddenly by him. He was to go through the ordinary process of purification commanded for others; he was also to offer a trespass-offering as having "sinned through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord;" his head was to be shaved, and he was to begin the days of his separation over again. We have, then, in this section—

First: *A recognition of the fact that man may die suddenly and unexpectedly.* "If any man die very suddenly by him." It is here implied that death may seize a man so quickly and so entirely without any sign of his approach, that the most zealous and watchful Nazarite may be unable to avoid defilement from the dead body. While death sometimes approaches his victims with measured steps and slow, at other times he smites them with the suddenness and rapidity of a lightning-flash. He arrests not only the aged and the weak, but the young and the strong also. In the case even of the healthy and vigorous, and apparently secure, frequently there is but a step between them and death. Wise and blessed are they to whom even sudden death is great gain! (a)

Second: *An illustration of the truth that a good man may fall into sin, and of the consequences of such sin.* The case which is here legislated for is that of defilement which is quite involuntary, and, as we should say, accidental. It is a figure of the involuntary sins of good men, sins of infirmity, sins into which they are suddenly surprised, faults by which they are overtaken. In our present state we are exposed to subtle Satanic temptations; currents of evil influence, which are both insidious and strong, bear frequently upon us; we are in danger of being taken in an un-

guarded moment, and surprised into sin. "We have heard how suddenly the storm sweeps down upon certain lakes. One moment all is calm, and in another the loosened wind lashes the slumbering waters into waves and billows, as if the storm-spirit had been looking on from some rift of the hills, and watching for an opportunity of plaguing the unsuspecting lake. So is it with men who are overtaken in a fault. They are apt to imagine that momentary quiet means permanent rest, and when they resign their weapons, the enemy leaps upon them fiercely." "You were going quietly on your way, thinking no evil, suddenly temptation, for which you were not prepared, presented itself, and before you knew where you were, you were in the dust, fallen." It is sins of this class, class in men of sincere piety, which are illustrated in the text. It is here suggested—

I. That such sins defile and dishonour good men.

"If any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration: then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it." The head is mentioned as defiled not because uncleanness was specially retained in the hair; but because "the consecration of his God was upon his head." His unshorn hair was the mark of his self-dedication to God. He himself, as a person thus consecrated, was regarded as impure by reason of his nearness to the dead. If a good man be ensnared by temptation and commit sin, that sin will leave its mark upon his being. We cannot sin under any circumstances without contracting some measure of defilement. Nor can any good man sin without dishonour, even his involuntary sins tarnish and soil the lustre of "the diadem of his God upon his head." When Abram sinned

through fear, by telling only a half-truth with an intention to deceive Pharaoh, how mean and dishonoured he appeared! As we look upon Pharaoh, the man of the world, rebuking Abram, the man of God, we feel how painfully the latter has humiliated and degraded himself. When the godly man is even suddenly surprised into sin by subtle and strong temptation, he incurs impurity and sad reproach.

II. That such sins require atonement on the part of good men.

The Nazarite who had unintentionally contracted ceremonial uncleanness was required to bring to the priest a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, as in the case of those who had unclean issues (comp. vers. 10, 11, with Lev. xv. 14, 15). He was also required to bring a trespass-offering, as one who had "sinned, through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord" (comp. ver. 12 with Lev. v. 15, 16). For us in this gospel age the grand offering, which consummates and crowns all previous offerings, has been made: "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." And if a good man sin by reason of infirmity, or be tripped up and overthrown by temptation almost ere he is aware of it, he must penitently approach unto God through that great sacrifice,—must repent of his sin, humbly confess it unto God, and seek forgiveness from Him. (See 1 John i. 9; ii. 1, 2.)

III. That such sins involve loss to good men.

The Nazarite who involuntarily was defiled lost time. The former days of his separation were not reckoned unto him: "the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled." He was put back, and required to begin afresh: "he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation." In this we have a striking illustration of a very solemn spiritual truth: a godly man cannot sin under any circumstances without suffering sad loss—loss not only of progress, but of spiritual purity, peace, and power. This will account for the very slow

progress of many in the Christian course. In an unguarded moment we are led astray, and wander from God and light into sin and darkness. In great mercy "He restoreth our soul;" but the journey home is sad and sorrowful, and we have lost much of good and gained bitter experience and painful memories. (b)

IV. That such sin will be followed by new efforts on the part of good men.

The Nazarite who had unintentionally incurred defilement began again the term of separation which he had vowed unto the Lord. "And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation." The godly man may fall into sin, but he will not continue therein. He will "remember from whence he has fallen, and repent, and do the first works." "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." "There are ever," says Archbishop Trench, "goads in the recollection of a better and a nobler past, goading him who has taken up with meaner things and lower, and urging him to reclaim and recover what he has lost; as, to take an extreme instance, it is the Prodigal's recollection of the bread enough and to spare in his father's house, which makes the swine's husks, and the famine even among them, so intolerable to him" (Luke xv. 17; cf. Heb. x. 32). And Robertson: "In the darkest, wildest, wanderings, a man to whom God has shown His love in Christ is conscious still of the better way. In the very gloom of his remorse, there is an instinctive turning back to God."

Conclusion.

1. *Let godly men watch and pray lest they be ensnared by temptation and fall into sin.* "Be sober, be vigilant," etc.

2. *Let those who, in an unguarded hour, have fallen into sin be encouraged to return penitently unto God through Jesus*

Christ. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord," etc. (Jer. iii.

12-15). "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God," etc. (Hos. xiv. 1-7).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) "In the midst of life we are in death." *Ha* is the interjection of laughter. *Ah* is an interjection of sorrow; the difference betwixt them is very small, consisting only in the transposition of what is no substantial letter, but a bare aspiration. How quickly, in one minute, in the very turning of a breath, is our mirth changed into mourning! Thus it was with upwards of seventy (mostly females) who were burned to death in the sudden conflagration of the theatre at Richmond, in Virginia. "Ah!" said the narrator of the dreadful catastrophe, "how little thought the fair one, whose curls were adjusted, whose garments, costly and elegant, were disposed so as to produce on the spectator the most impressive effect, that those curls were that same night to be crisped with the devouring flame, and those garments to be denied the service of a winding sheet!"—*Gleanings*.

I was meditating yesterday upon death, till I was amazed that it is almost the only subject which is never treated of in conversation further than as a mere uninteresting fact. Were any number of persons intending to embark for a distant, unknown country, of whom some might be called to-morrow, and all must be called soon, would they not, whenever they met as friends and fellow-travellers, be enquiring amongst themselves how each was provided for the journey; what accounts each had heard of the place; the terms of reception; what interest and hopes each had secured, what treasures remitted, what protection insured; and would they not excite each other to despatch what was yet possible to be done, and might to-morrow be irretrievably too late? I think it would sit pleasingly on the mind when a friend was vanished out of this visible world to have such conversations to reflect upon. What astonishing scenes are now opened to the minds of many with whom, a few months ago, we used familiarly and triflingly to converse; with whom we have wasted many an inestimable hour! What clear views have they now of those great and important truths, for which the foolish bustle of this world leaves scarcely any place in the immortal mind.—*Talbot*.

(b) A young man who for several months in a backsliding state, which manifested itself in the usual way—of conformity to a fashionable and unholy course of life, and a neglect of the ordinances and institutions of the house of God. During this time he called on a deacon of the church, who was a watchmaker, and asked him to repair his watch. "What is the difficulty with your watch?" said he. "It has lost time lately," said the young man. The deacon looked up to him with a steady and significant eye, and said, "Havn't you lost

time lately?" Those few words brought the backslider to repentance, to the Church, and to duty.—*Christian Treasury*.

How a single sin tends to modify the history, to check the progress, and to impair the happiness and honour of even a child of God! This was eminently the case with Aaron and Moses. They had "spoken unadvisedly with their lips" at Massah and Meribah, and therefore God had "sworn in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest," that, namely, of the earthly Canaan. One reason why God is more apt to punish His people on earth for sin is, that they are not to be punished for it hereafter. Hence, for the sake of justice and impartiality, He often inflicts upon them severe rebukes even here, while taking little cognizance, seemingly, of the sins of some of His enemies, for whom the wrath of the future is reserved. He forgives His people and yet He "takes vengeance on their inventions." Thus Noah's drunkenness was punished by Canaan's contempt and Ham's unnatural conduct. Thus David's sin, in the matter of Uriah, was punished by the death of the child of guilt. Thus Lot's sin, in choosing to dwell in Sodom, was punished by the vexation he met with there, and by the sins of his family. Thus Peter's denial of his Master was punished by that look of Christ which sent a dart of remorse through his soul, and wrung from his eyes those bitter penitential tears. And thus Aaron and Moses, might be said, in a sense, to expiate their sins by a premature and public death. There can be little doubt that God still visits His "people's faults with rods and their sins with chastisements;" now by permitting a remorse even greater than their iniquities had deserved; now by allowing their subjection to abuse and calumny fiercer than they are entitled to; now by hiding His countenance from them; now by visiting them with the loss of friends and other painful bereavements; now by breaking their own health, and abridging their days; and now by clouding their death-beds, and depriving them there of all sensible comfort and hope. Many a one wonders how a great, sincere, and Christian man like Dr. Johnson, should have been so gloomy in his feelings, so terribly afraid of death, so void of peace and joy in believing; but his biographer, Boswell, has, with characteristic honesty and imprudence, explained one cause at least of this, by mentioning a certain sin which did easily beset the philosopher on even to old age, although he struggled against it energetically, and most bitterly deplored its power over him; and were the biographers of other sad-hearted Christians, whose dark diaries are printed, acting with the same downrightness, they might account for much that is at present

mysterious in their misery. God will by no means "clear the guilty" even among His own people; and although all their sins are laid on Christ, and pardoned for His sake at last, it is quite consistent with this that they should be punished here. This dispensation is a merciful, as well as a just one. It tends to check men in courses that might otherwise become habitual and hopeless. And it shows

what a fatherly interest God takes in His people, administering to them salutary discipline, and bringing them back to Him by the rod. "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." How happy those who receive all their "evil things" here!—*George Gilfillan, M.A.*

THE OFFERING OF THE NAZARITE, OR THE SACRIFICE OF THE CONSECRATED.

(Verses 13-21).

In these verses we have the ceremonies to be observed by the Nazarite when the days of his separation were ended. "The directions as to the release from consecration are called '*the law of the Nazarite*' (verse 13), because the idea of the Nazarite's vows culminated in the sacrificial festival which terminated the consecration, and it was in this that it attained to its fullest manifestation." In these ceremonies we discover illustrations of certain important truths of universal application; to these truths let us direct our attention.

I. That the lives even of the best of men in the present state are imperfect.

When the Nazarite had successfully fulfilled the days of his separation he could not approach God without a sin-offering. He was required to "offer one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish," as an expiation for sins involuntarily committed during the period of consecration. This, though mentioned second in the text, was offered first. "Though he had fulfilled the vow of his separation without any pollution, yet he must bring a sacrifice for sin; for there is guilt insensibly contracted by the best of men, even in their best works—some good omitted, some ill admitted, which, if we were dealt with in strict justice, would be our ruin, and in consequence of which it is necessary for us to receive the atonement, and plead it as our righteousness before God." "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which

was our duty to do." When we have done our uttermost and best, we still need an interest in the great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. (a)

II. That our services are acceptable to God only as we give ourselves to Him.

After the sin-offering, the Nazarite was to "offer unto the Lord one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering." The burnt-offering was an acknowledgment of God's sovereign claims upon the Nazarite, and a symbol of his surrender of himself, body and soul, to the Lord. So, also, the hair of his head, which had been worn in honour of God, he was to cut off at the door of the tabernacle, and put it into the altar fire which was under the sacrifice of the peace-offerings, thus offering up a portion of his own person in sacrifice to the Lord. The grand meaning and end of all sacrifice is the surrender of ourselves to God. Our most treasured possessions we must give to Him; we must worship Him with our best. Apart from this self-sacrifice all other sacrifices and services are worthless in the sight of God. The worth and efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin consisted in the entire surrender of Himself to the will of God. And the grand object of that death as set forth by St. Paul on one occasion is, that every man should sacrifice himself to God. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." "We are Christ's 'slaves.'

He purchased us, not to set us free and to make us our own masters, but that we might belong to Him. The rights of a master over a slave appeared to the Apostle to represent the rights of Christ over us. . . . The slave has no personal independence. He has to do his master's will. His master determines where he shall live and what he shall do. He works to increase, not his own wealth, but his master's. He has to live for his master, not for himself. The renunciation of all personal objects in the presence of Christ is the precise characteristic of Christian living." Without this self-renunciation all other services and sacrifices are vain in the sight of God. (b)

III. That all that is good both in ourselves and in our services is attributable to God.

The Nazarite was also required to "offer unto the Lord one ram without blemish for peace-offerings, and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat-offering and their drink-offerings." By reference to Lev. vii. 11-12, it will be seen that this was offered "for a thanksgiving." The Nazarite presented the sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the Lord as an expression of thankfulness to Him for the grace by which he had been enabled to fulfil his vow. Whatever of good there is in us is the result of Divine grace. All holy desires are quickened by Him. Every worthy resolution which we form He inspires within us by His Spirit. The strength for holy living, and diligent working, and patient suffering, He imparts. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above," etc. "By the grace of God I am what I am." "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

IV. That the good man when he

has complied with the express requirements of the Divine law will seek for other opportunities of expressing his devotion.

"This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed his offering unto the Lord for his separation, beside that which his hand shall get, according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation;" that is, says Keil and Del., "he had to offer the sacrifices previously mentioned on the ground of his consecration vow. Beyond that he was free to vow anything else according to his ability, to present other sacrificial gifts to the Lord for His sanctuary and His servants, which did not necessarily belong to the vow of the Nazarite, but were frequently added." The fulfilment of even the largest requirements of the Divine law cannot exhaust the devotion of the truly godly soul. He who has truly given himself to the Lord can never give Him enough to satisfy his own desire; where he has given his utmost he would fain give more. "Love never puts its own name upon anything. Love has some object, *must* have some object, on whose shrine it lays its every possession. Love, warm, intelligent, growing Love, keeps back nothing from God. Its beaming eyes look upon every treasure with a view of ascertaining its proper relation to the King. Love has endless resources, because it has endless sacrifices. We make a grievous mistake when we say, 'Such a man must be *rich* because he *gives* so much to the cause of God;' he may not be rich in material possessions, but he must be rich in the *spirit of self-sacrifice*. He has a *wealthy heart*, and that explains the bounty which astonishes and confounds those who have a prince's gold, but a beggar's spirit." (c)

V. That the good man through the sacrifices by which He approaches God has communion with Him.

Such seems to be the meaning symbolized in that part of the ceremonial, for which directions are given in verses 19 and 20. We quote the note of Keil

and Del. : "When this had been done the priest took the boiled shoulder of the ram, with an unleavened cake and wafer out of the basket, and placed these pieces in the hands of the Nazarite, and waved them before Jehovah. They then became the portion of the priest, in addition to the wave-breast and heave-leg which fell to the priest in the case of every peace-offering (Lev. vii. 32-34), to set forth the participation of the Lord in the sacrificial meal. But the fact that, in addition to these, the boiled shoulder was given up symbolically to the Lord through the process of waving, together with a cake and wafer, was intended to indicate that the table-fellowship with the Lord, shadowed forth in the sacrificial meal of the peace-offering, took place here in a higher degree ; inasmuch as the Lord directed a portion of the Nazarite's meal to be handed over to His representatives and servants for them to eat, that he might thus enjoy the blessedness of having fellowship with his God, in accordance with that condition of priestly sanctity into which the Nazarite had entered through the vow that he had made." Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the good man may have the most intimate and blessed com-

munion with God. "Jesus saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," etc. (Heb. x. 19-22.) "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Conclusion.

1. *Let us give ourselves unreservedly and heartily to God.* "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," etc.

2. *Let us seek through God to realize close and constant communion with Him.*

"I would commune with Thee, my God,
E'en to Thy seat I come;
I leave my joys, I leave my sins,
And seek in Thee my home.
I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul;
I hear the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll;
But I am calm with Thee, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies;
And to the height of Thine abode,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.
O this is life, and peace, and joy,
My God, to find Thee so—
Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear,
And all Thy love to know."

—G. B. Bubier.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When, because we have accomplished some little work, we count that we may straightway take our ease, and esteem our "Well done" as already gained, very profitable will be then the warning of the parable (Luke xvii. 7-10); the example of the hind, who having laboured all day in the field, resumes his labours in the house, and only looks to rest and refresh himself when his master has no further need of his service; good for us that, in the words of the son of Sirach, we learn to "wax old in our work" (xi. 20), and, so long as we are here, to see in one task completed but a stepping-stone to another which shall be begun; ever as we have surmounted one hill of labour, perceiving a new one rising above it, and girding ourselves for the surmounting of that as well. Well for us, too, is it to know and to confess that we are not doing God a favour in serving Him, but He the highest favour to us in enabling us to this service; and that He, graciously accepting our work and rewarding it, does this solely out of the freedom and riches of His grace; adding

to it a worth which of itself it does not possess; that there is another footing, that namely of the parable, upon which He might have put all—yea, upon which, though *He* does not, yet *we* must evermore put it, so far as is necessary for subduing every motion of pride and vain-glory, every temptation to bring in God as our debtor—which we evermore are doing, or are on the point of doing.—*Archbishop Trench.*

There is an anecdote of the saintly and learned Archbishop Usher, not unfamiliar to religious readers, which is meant to illustrate his spiritual modesty. It relates how a friend frequently urged him to write his thoughts on Sanctification, which at length he engaged to do; but, a considerable time elapsing, the performance of his promise was unfortunately claimed. The Archbishop replied to this purpose: "I have not written, and yet I cannot charge myself with a breach of promise, for I began to write; but when I came to treat of the new creature which God formeth by His own Spirit in every regenerate

soul, I found so little of it wrought in myself that I could speak of it only as parrots, or by rote, but without the knowledge of what I might have expressed; and, therefore, I durst not presume to proceed any further upon it." Upon this his friend stood amazed to hear such a confession from so grave, holy, and eminent a person. The Archbishop then added: "I must tell you, we do not well understand what Sanctification and the new creature are. It is no less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his own will to the will of God; and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love, as a whole burnt-offering to Christ; and oh, how many who profess Christianity are unacquainted, experimentally, with this work upon their souls!"—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) It is very possible for Christian men to miss the real extent of the devotion to Himself which is claimed by our Lord, and which, throughout the New Testament, is assumed and implied as the true Christian life. A Christian man may consider that he is at liberty to determine for himself the objects for which he will live, provided he seeks those objects in ways which the ethics of the New Testament do not condemn. He may suppose, for instance, that if he likes he may determine to accumulate a hundred thousand pounds or a quarter of a million, and that the law of Christ simply requires him to carry on his business or profession in a just and honourable manner, and to give a fair proportion of his wealth to the relief of the poor, and the maintenance of various religious societies. Or he may suppose that having set his heart upon rising to a certain social rank, or winning a certain political position, he is quite at liberty to concentrate all his strength on this object, so long as there is nothing dishonest or ignoble in the means which he adopts to secure it. But if there be any truth at all in the Apostle's description of us, if in any sense we are the "slaves" of Christ, there is obviously a fundamental mistake in this conception of the limits of our duty. Our first question must be whether Christ wants us to accumulate a hundred thousand pounds or a quarter of a million; and whether He wants us to win the social rank, or the political power which we have resolved to make our own. A master may often trust his servants to determine for themselves *how* they will get a certain work done, but whether the work shall be done at all or not, is a question which must in all cases be referred to his decision. And when we are choosing an object to live for—an object which it may take us many years to achieve—it certainly shows a curious conception of the kind of relationship in which we stand to Christ, to imagine that we need not consult Him about the *end* for which we are to live, though we must be careful to employ only those means which He approves. Our life, on this theory, is not given to Christ. We keep it for ourselves. We are not really

His. We choose the objects to which it shall be devoted. The renunciation of self which He imperatively requires of us is altogether evaded. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of our life in such a sense that it is for Him to determine the objects for which our life shall be spent, as well as the way in which these objects shall be sought. We are in such a sense His servants, that we have no right to do any work but His. If we desire that He should say to us at last, "Well done, good and faithful servants," it is clear that whatever we do must be done for Him.—*R. W. Dale, M.A., D.D.*

(c) David wanted to make an offering himself, wanted to give vent to the sorrow, dependence, and gratitude of his soul; and a costless sacrifice would not have met this want. It would have been useless to suggest that such a sacrifice would be as good as any other; in itself it might be, but not to him. He felt that the occasion demanded something more, that something more was due both to God and to himself: the offering must be the fruit and form of deep and holy emotions, and to give a gift would be to mock rather than to manifest these emotions. An illustration may be taken from some of the old sacred buildings. You will find them "finished with the most circumstantial elegance and minuteness in those concealed portions which are excluded from public view, and which can only be inspected by laborious climbing or groping," a fact explained by saying, "that the whole carving and execution was considered as an act of solemn worship and adoration, in which the artist offered up his best faculties to the praise of the Creator." These men of "the dark ages," as we love in the pride of our compassion to call them, had in this a true and grand idea: what would they say of our venerated and gilded modern life, in which everything is for show and nothing from reality, everything for a purpose and nothing from a principle? As these men builded, so David sacrificed. They builded not for man, and hence the secret and distant parts of their work were just as accurately conceived and finely finished as those exposed to the public gaze; their object was not to do something as cheaply and easily as possible, but something as well as possible; they wished to raise structures worthy of the Lord; they had a zeal for His glory and the glory of His worship which spurned meanness and imperfection however hidden; and the same spirit in David rendered needful to him what was needless in itself, and made it "more blessed to give" an offering of his own than one received from Araunah.

It is the end and essence of all religion to turn the mind from self to God; to give it absorbing views of the Divine beauty and glory; to fill it with Divine love and zeal; to make it feel honoured in honouring God, blessed in blessing Him; to make it feel that nothing is good enough or great enough for

Him; and when the mind is thus affected and thus possessed, it will understand and share the spirit of David's resolve, *not* to offer

burnt-offerings unto the Lord God of that which doth cost nothing.—*A. J. Morris*,

THE NAZARITE.

(Verse 21.)

“This is the law of the Nazarite.”

Here a new ordinance appears. Israel's whole race was severed from the world. But the wide circumference was girdle to a narrower circle. Where all were separate, the Nazarites occupied special separation. They bound themselves by voluntary vows. The vow might be the act of men weighed down by consciousness of sin, appalled by sight of inborn evil, or penitent by grievous falls. It might be gratitude for signal mercies. It might be zeal to arouse others to think more of God. The Nazarites' motives are unknown. But Nazarite rules are rigidly prescribed.

I. No juice of grape, no produce of the vine, from kernel unto husk, may touch the consecrated lips.

Believer, this principle is broad and deep. You openly avow that you are not your own. Your body, spirit, mind, and soul, are purchased by redeeming blood. They all are bound a living sacrifice to the one altar—Christ. Hence you must keep them pure, clean, bright, strong, vigorous for His work. They should stand as servants, with loins girt, ready at all times to discharge His will. Then sedulously flee whatever may tend to weaken the firm energy, or to stir up the sleeping brood of sensual and ungodly lusts.

II. No razor approaches the Nazarite's hair. His flowing locks openly announce his separate state.

The dedication must not be a secret act, known only to the conscience and the Lord. Religion is not for the closet or the knees alone. It is not a lily, growing only in the shade. It must be conspicuous, as locks pendant from the head. Like the standard, it must proclaim the country to which the ship belongs. Pure religion shines as the

sun, without one cloud. Thus others profit by its rays.

III. He must avoid all contact with the dead. (Verse 6, 7.)

Wherefore is death to be thus shunned? It is the penalty of sin. Therefore it is emblem of what holy men should holily abhor. Life, too, is God's inseparable essence. Therefore, to intermix with death, denotes a separation from God. He who is Christ's must flee the touch of everything allied to sin. The Spirit's temple must be pure. Believer, rigidly apply this maxim. It drives you from the contagion of ungodly scenes. How many crowds are nothing but a crowded charnel house! How many books are deathful! This rule brands many a pulpit as a plague-spot. A lifeless teacher often guides in paths of death. Here, too, we see the misery of those who by dead works expect to buy soul-life. All works are dead which grow not on the stem of faith. How can they purchase life?

But no precautionary care can always keep men from the dying scene. Death has an unrestricted range. Thus the most watchful Nazarite might most unwillingly stand by the dead. If so, pollution has polluted him; his vow is broken. Therefore, atonement must be made. He is required to place a whole burnt offering on the blazing altar. He must then add a sacrifice for sin. Moreover, as a debtor, he must buy remission by a trespass-offering. Thus the chief types which shadowed out Christ's blood must all be brought. This is not all. The former period of his Nazirate is cancelled; he must commence afresh his dedicated walk. Beware of sudden evil. Satan is a lurking foe; where

least suspected, nets are spread. But there is hope for suddenly-contracted guilt. There is a Saviour waiting to obliterate; there is no stain which He removes not. Pardon found must be the starting-point of new devotedness. The cleansed hands fight with more vigour.

But what if deliberate transgression be indulged? The ordinance is silent here, and thus warns solemnly. Where shall he turn who turns presumptuously from God? Grieve not the Spirit's gentle mind.

The Nazarite continued only for a fixed time; but grand solemnities

attested the completion of this hallowed state. No rite is absent which confesses need of remission, and trust in reconciling blood. (Verses 13-21.) What is the purport of this multitude of rites? They all seek expiation. They graphically show that holiest deeds of holiest men can only find acceptance through the dying Jesus. Believer, is not this the conscious feeling of your humbled soul? Behold the cross. There is your only help; cleanse there the stains of your most holy hours. Live under vows, as a strict Nazarite; but wrestle for forgiveness as a sad short-comer.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING.

(Verses 22-27.)

"The spiritual character of the congregation of Israel culminated in the blessing with which the priests were to bless the people. The directions as to this blessing, therefore, impressed the seal of perfection upon the whole order and organization of the people of God, inasmuch as Israel was first truly formed into a congregation of Jehovah by the fact that God not only bestowed His blessing upon it, but placed the communication of this blessing in the hands of the priests, the chosen and constant mediators of the blessings of His grace, and imposed it upon them as one portion of their official duty. The blessing which the priests were to impart to the people, consisted of a triple blessing of two members each, which stood related to each other thus. The second in each case contained a special application of the first to the people, and the three gradations unfolded the substance of the blessing step by step with ever-increasing emphasis."—*Keil and Del.*

Let us notice—

I. The Divine Direction.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel." It was the duty of the priests ministerially to

bless the people by prayer to God on their behalf; they were to entreat Him to bless them. But in this place they are commanded to pronounce His blessing upon them: speaking in His name, and as His representative, they were to declare the people blessed. The blessing which is pronounced in accordance with the Divine direction cannot be a mere form; it must accord with reality. The command to pronounce the blessing may be regarded as an assurance that, when it was pronounced, the blessing itself would be given. The command to the priest to pronounce the blessing is equivalent to the promise of God to bestow that blessing. The Christian minister is required both to pray for the blessing of God upon the people of His charge, and with confidence to pronounce that blessing upon all who sincerely seek God.

II. The Divine Benediction.

"Saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Let us notice here—

1. *The significant form of the Benediction.* (1) *The triple use of the sacred Name is significant.* "The Priestly

Blessing prescribed for ritual usage in the Book of Numbers," says Canon Liddon, "is spoken of as putting the *Name* of God, that is to say, a symbol unveiling His nature upon the children of Israel. 'Here, then, we discover a distinct limit to the number of the Persons Who are internal to the Unity of God. The priest is to repeat the Most Holy Name Three times. The Hebrew accentuation, whatever be its date, shows that the Jews themselves saw in this repetition the declaration of a mystery in the Divine Nature. Unless such a repetition had been designed to secure the assertion of some important truth, a single mention of the Sacred Name would have been natural in a system, the object of which was to impress belief in the Divine Unity upon an entire people. This significant repetition, suggesting, without distinctly asserting, a Trinity in the Being of God, did its work in the mind of Israel." The same thing has been argued from a consideration of the several members of the Benediction. Thus Richard Watson says, "If the three members of this form of benediction be attentively considered, they will be found to agree respectively with the three Persons taken in the usual order of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is the Author of blessing and preservation; illumination and grace are from the Son; illumination and peace from the Spirit, the Teacher of truth, and the Comforter." And while in the triple mention of the sacred Name and the threefold blessing, we have suggestions of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, in the great assurance, "I will bless them," we have a revelation of the Divine Unity—that God is One. (2) *The use of the singular number in reference to the subjects of the blessing is significant.* "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee," etc. Six times we have the pronoun in the singular number—"thee." According to the *Speaker's Comm.*, the singular number indicates that the blessing is conferred on Israel collectively. May we not view it also

as indicating the regard of God for the individual? "If we take the law to ourselves, we may take the blessing to ourselves, as if our names were inserted." So the Christian believer may say, "The son of God loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

2. *The Divine fulness of the Benediction.* "As the threefold repetition of a word or sentence serves to express the thought as strongly as possible (cf. Jer. vii. 4, xxii. 29), the triple blessing expressed in the most unconditional manner the thought, that God would bestow upon His congregation the whole fulness of the blessing enfolded in His Divine Being which was manifested as Jehovah." Man's need of God's blessing is implied. That need arises from his condition as a creature dependent on God for "life, and breath, and all things;" and as a sinful creature, who merits no good from God. Apart from the blessing of God man is utterly undone. First, the blessing of God in general is pronounced, "The Lord bless thee;" and then that blessing is pronounced in some of its particular forms (a). The second clause in each verse of the Benediction defines more closely the general tenor of the preceding one. The blessing includes—(1) *The preservation of God.* "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee." Danger is implied. We are weak, inexperienced, prone to sin, exposed to temptation. God is our only sufficient and all-sufficient Guardian. What subtlety can surprise Him who is infinite in intelligence? What strength can stand against Omnipotence? "Kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation" (b). (2) *The favour of God.* "The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." When the Divine face is dark with frowns, distress and death ensue; when it is bright with favours, life and joy flow to man. "They perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance." "Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." There seems to be an allusion to the shining of the sun. It gives life, light, heat, beauty, power, joy. "In His favour is life." "The light of

the Divine countenance is the sum of all delight." (See our notes on *Psa.* lxxx. 3; *Hom. Comm. on Psalms*, pp. 466-468). (3) *The peace of God.* "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." שָׁלוֹם *peace*, "the sum of all the good which God sets, prepares, or establishes for His people." M. Henry: "Peace, including all that good which goes to make up a complete happiness." This great blessing is viewed as flowing from the gracious regard of God for man. Pardon, preservation, peace, an unspeakable wealth of blessing flows to man from the sovereign favour of our gracious God.

III. The Divine Ratification.

"And they shall put my name upon

the children of Israel, and I will bless them." The Benediction was not to be the mere utterance of a pious wish; but God would give effect to it. The people were to be blessed in the Sacred Name, and as the people of God; and God promises to make good the blessing pronounced by the priests. "A Divine blessing goes along with Divine institutions, and puts virtue and efficacy into them." God will certainly bless His own ordinances unto all those who believe.

Conclusion.

Let us firmly believe in the great willingness of God to bless us, and let us heartily seek for "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When we ask God's blessing, we pray that first He would bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We pray that He would bless us with the pardon of every sin, with the healing of every moral disease, with fitness for the world to come, with victory over the trials of the world that now is. We pray that He would stamp upon our hearts that Divine and inexhaustible blessing which will turn our trials into elements of sanctification, our griefs and our tears into a ministry of grace and progress, and education for glory; and all the assaults of Satan and the obstructions of sin into means of ripening and maturing us as the sons of God for a kingdom that fadeth not away. It is God's blessing laid upon the heart within that alters to a Christian the whole world without. If the world were now to be turned into Paradise by God's breath coming over it again,—yet, if unconverted men were left to tread that Paradise, they would soon reduce it to the desert, polluting, blasting, and destroying all. No outer change for the better will ever do without an inner one. There must not only be a pure and beautiful Paradise, but there must be a holy man and a holy woman to live in it; and it would be in vain that the millennium were to burst upon our world if we had not first a little millennium within to melt into the great millennium without, making the outer world and the inner world in harmony, at peace with God, and therefore at peace with one another. Our constant idea is, that what man wants is something done to his outer circumstances; the real and the Divine one is that something should be done for man in his inner heart. Man is sick and dying; it will be of very little, or of very transient use to change his bed; what he wants is to be

cured of his disease. The great mischief is, not what sin has done to the outer world, but what sin has done to the inner world; and if the inner world can be made right, then all the outer will seem to be altered. If you go forth with a sad, a grieved, and a bruised spirit into the loveliest scenes of nature, they will all lose their charms to you. To a man who is sorrowful, his own fireside will only reflect sorrow; to a heart that is ill at ease, the fairest landscape will communicate no ecstasy. But on the other hand, let a man's heart be overflowing with joy—let the first light of Eden that is to be, shine into his mind, and the very desert itself to that man's eye will grow beautiful, and the blackest scenes of the world will shine bright, and all nature will reflect a joy that is first in his own heart, and repeats itself by a law as beneficent as it is true, wherever he sets his foot, or in whatever path of the world he walks. What we need therefore is, first the blessing pronounced on the heart, and then we shall hear it in multiplying echoes, and reflected in sweet music from every point of the horizon around and without us.—*John Cumming, D. D.*

(b) Christians are kept by the supreme love of their omnipotent Saviour (*John* x. 28, 29; *Jude* i.). The Lord Jesus not only redeemed His people; He is at this hour interceding for them; and His intercession keeps the saints. As Peter was kept (*Luke* xxii. 31) by the Saviour's mediation, so all the good of all lands, in every age, are supported in temptation and brought through to the praise and glory of God. Sublime is the realization of the thought that our LIVING AND DIVINE LORD is standing before the Throne promoting the well-being of His struggling and oftentimes dispirited Church. He knows that we

are still in the wilderness as "strangers and pilgrims"—still exposed to the attacks of a relentless antagonist—and still possessors of a depraved nature; hence, He "ever liveth to make intercession" for His Church. Would it not comfort our hearts in seasons of distress to ponder the fact of our Saviour's intercession? No longer would we be oppressed with a sense of loneliness, for no spirit can be desolate for which the Son of God is interceding. Am I addressing a faint-hearted disciple of the Lord—one who is ever on the stormy lake of Galilee? Cheer thee! though human sympathy may flow scantily, Divine sympathy is unlimited in abundance. The Saviour, though unseen, is not inaccessible; and though no longer on the Cross, He stands as the great High priest in the Holy of Holies. He will

"keep" His people as the apple of His eye. He has "all power" to curb the rage of the whirlwind, and to pacify the roar of the storm, and to bring His Israel to their "desired haven"! "Kept by the power of God." What more can we need to assure our hearts and to transfuse them with peace? "The power of God" is the stay of the universe—it is the hope of all creation animate and inanimate. Blessed God! they are well kept whom Thou keepest; do Thou in Thy abounding goodness comfort our hearts with the assurance that Thou wilt keep us unto the end! We cannot keep ourselves: we are blind, and weak, and ignorant, but Thou art full of help; teach us, therefore, by Thy Spirit, to feel that "our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."—*Jos. Parker, D.D.*

THE PREACHER'S BLESSING; OR THE HAPPY NEW YEAR.

(Verses 22-26.)

New Year's Day so seldom falls on a Sunday, that, when it does, it would be a pity to let it slip, without wishing you all a happy new year, according to the good old English custom. But the world's notion of happiness, and the Gospel notion of happiness, are very different; and therefore the world's wishes for your happiness, and the preacher's wishes for your happiness must be very different also. The world's good wishes are like itself, worldly: they look chiefly to the body: they reach not beyond earth, and the things of earth. Whereas the good wishes of the preacher are chiefly for your souls: he looks, and by his office is bound to look, first to the one thing needful; his desires for your welfare are guided by the Gospel, and, like that, would raise you up to heaven. Even with regard to this world, the preacher knows full well, that the greatest happiness we can any of us enjoy is a peaceful mind, a quiet conscience, the feeling that God is reconciled to us, and loves us, and cares for us, and watches over us, and will so order and arrange whatever may befall us, that all things shall work together for our good. These are the very best gifts which any man can have in this life; and they are all contained in the text. Therefore, to every one of you I say, "The Lord bless thee, and keep

thee," etc. But let us look at the text a little in detail; and let us keep in mind that this solemn blessing was of God's own appointment; so that we may expect to find mention of all those things which He knows to be best for His people.

"The Lord bless thee"! that is, the Lord give thee every good gift, and pour down on thee in due abundance whatever is wholesome and profitable, for thy soul first, and also for thy body. "The Lord keep thee!" that is, the Lord watch over thee for good, and shield thee from every kind of evil.

"The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." You all know the difference of feel between a sunshiny and a cloudy day. The real heat may be the same—nay, the cloudy may be warmer than the sunshiny—for we often have bright sunshine in the clear frosty days of winter, and heavy clouds in the middle of summer. But though the real heat may be the same—though the thermometer may tell us that the cloudy day is the warmer of the two—yet to our feelings it may be quite the contrary. There is something so enlivening in the sun, that I have often known persons come in from a walk on a bright winter's day, and speak of it as very pleasant; while the same persons on a damp,

cloudy evening in July, would be the first to shiver, and to wish for a fire. Now, the same difference does it make to a man's soul, whether God's face is shining on him or no. Let God's face shine on the soul, it walks in the brightest sunshine; let God veil His face and cloud it over, the soul feels chilled and is discomforted. (Psa. xxx. 7.) Do we not see many a man disquieted and ill at ease in the midst of riches and luxuries; while his poor neighbour, who lives in a sorry hovel, may look always cheerful and contented? What is this difference owing to? Not to the health and strength of the poor man; for he may be old, and often a sufferer from cold and wet, and he cannot afford to buy himself the little comforts suited to his years and infirmities. The rich man, on the other hand, may still be young; his disease, if it can be called one, is more of the mind than of the body; he can consult the best physicians; he can travel from place to place in search of pleasure; he is not forced to deny himself any one earthly thing that may tend to his ease and enjoyment. Yet with all this, in spite of his youth and riches, in spite of his having no outward ailment, and possessing every comfort and luxury that heart could wish for, he may be always growling and grumbling; while the dweller in the old hovel, with the pinching frost of poverty and age, and sometimes sickness to boot, sharp upon him, may be ever making the best of his condition, and finding out something in it to thank God for. What, then, is this difference owing to? The cause is simply this, that the poor man has led a Christian life, or at least has turned to God in earnest, and repented of his sins betimes; and so God has allowed His face to shine upon him and to cheer him; while his rich neighbour has been led astray by the deceitfulness of riches, and has been so taken up with his pleasures, or with the cares which riches bring with them, that he could not spare time to think about God. He has turned his face away from God; therefore God has turned

away His face from him, and left him in clouds and heaviness. Oh, that you might but know and feel the joy and gladness which the light of God's face can shed on the soul of the Christian!

"The Lord be gracious to thee!" that is, the Lord receive thy prayers, as a kind and merciful king hearkens to the petitions of his subjects (comp. Exod. xxii. 27; Neh. ix. 17; Jonah iv. 2; Psa. lxxvii. 7-9). To pray, then, that God will be gracious to His people, is to pray that He will listen to your supplications, and grant your requests, that He will be slow to mark what you have done amiss, and ready to take you into favour when you forsake your sins and cry to Him for pardon.

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee!" that is, the Lord show forth His favour and love toward you. We may suppose this expression taken from a king sitting on his throne, and looking with eyes of such goodwill on the petitioners who come before him that the by-standers perceive, and the petitioners themselves feel, that he is their friend: they feel that they have the happiness of being esteemed and loved by him, and that they can reckon with certainty on his protection. To be countenanced thus by the King of kings is the highest privilege a son of Adam can enjoy. If the king had looked favourably upon us, we should expect to receive some honour or preferment; or at least we should feel certain that, so far as he could hinder, he would not suffer anyone to hurt us. So is it with those who have God's countenance, but in a far, far higher degree. For the king, great as he is, is only a man. His power is cut short in a thousand ways, and, at the best, can only follow us to the grave. But God is the King of kings: His power has no bounds, except His own wisdom and goodness and will: in the grave, where human rule is at an end, His rule and sovereignty are doubled, etc.

"The Lord give thee peace!" Peace is the fruit of God's favour. "The effect of righteousness is peace." If we know we are forgiven for Christ's

sake, we are at peace. If, out of gratitude and love to our Master and Saviour, we are living in obedience to His holy laws, then too we have every ground and reason to be at peace (1 Pet. iii. 13).

There is a false peace, a peace arising out of recklessness and carelessness, and the never thinking about God. Would you say that Samson was at peace when he lay sleeping in the lap of Delilah? So dangerous, so deadly

is the false security of the self-righteous and the careless. Rouse yourselves, I beseech you, from such fatal slumbers, if any of you have hitherto been sinking beneath them. Awake! behold, the face of the Lord does *not* shine, but frown upon you. Let this be the first day of a new year of godly fear and hope.

The Lord bless you this year, and keep you! etc.—*A. W. Hare, A.M.*

GOD WILL BLESS HIS OWN ORDINANCES.

(Verses 23-27.)

The exercise of benevolence is that which every child of God should cultivate to the uttermost; but ministers above all should consider it as the distinguishing badge of their office; they are compelled indeed sometimes to "use sharpness;" but whether they rebuke, or whether they exhort, they should be actuated by nothing but a principle of love. Under the Law it was a very important part of the priestly office to bless the people, and God prescribed a form of words to be used by Aaron and his sons in the discharge of that duty. Nor can any words better express the scope and end of the Christian ministry. If the people be brought to receive abundant communications of grace and peace, and to surrender up themselves entirely to God, a minister can desire nothing more in this world; his labours are well repaid. To promote this blessed end, we shall—

I. Explain the words before us.

God is here making known His will to Moses, and directing him what orders to give to Aaron and his sons respecting the execution of their priestly office; and there are two duties which He assigns to them:—

1. *To bless the people in God's name.* This was repeatedly declared to be their office (Deut. xxi. 5), and the constant practice of the Apostles shows that it was to be continued under the Christian dispensation. In conformity to their

example, the Christian Church has universally retained the custom of closing the service with a pastoral benediction. We are not indeed to suppose that ministers can, by any power or authority of their own, convey a blessing (Acts iii. 12); they can neither select the persons who shall be blessed, nor fix the time, the manner, or the degree in which any shall receive a blessing; but, as stewards of the mysteries of God, they dispense the bread of life, assuredly expecting that their Divine Master will give a salutary effect to the ordinances of His own appointment. The direction in the text was confirmed with an express promise, that what they spake on earth should be ratified in heaven; and every faithful minister may take encouragement from it in the discharge of his own duty, and may consider God as saying to him, *Bless thou the congregation, "and I will bless them"* (Luke x. 5-6; John xx. 23).

2. *To claim the people as God's property.* To "put the name of God upon them" is to challenge them as His portion, the lot of His inheritance (Deut. xxxii. 9). This every minister must do in most authoritative terms; and not only claim them as His property, but excite them with all earnestness to surrender up themselves to His service. Nor shall their exhortations be lost, for God will accompany them "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;"

and the people, constrained by the Divine impulse, shall say, "I am the Lord's" (Isa. xlv. 3-5). Moreover, in their intercession for the people, they are also to urge this plea with God on their behalf (Jer. xiv. 9; Dan. ix. 17-19). Thus are they to strengthen the connection between God and them, and to promote that fellowship with God, which is the end, as well as the means, of all spiritual communications.

II. Notice some truths contained in them.

Amidst the many profitable observations that may be deduced from the text there are some deserving of peculiar attention.

1. *The priests under the Law, while they blessed the people, typically represented the office of Christ Himself.* Christ as our great High Priest performs every part of the priestly office; and it is remarkable that He was in the very act of blessing His disciples when He was taken up from them into heaven (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). Nor did He then cease, but rather began, as it were, to execute that office, which He has been fulfilling from that time to the present hour. St. Peter, preaching afterwards to a vast concourse of people, declared to them that to bless them was the great end for which Jesus had ascended, and that He was ready, both as a Prince and a Saviour, to give them repentance and remission of sins (Acts iii. 26; v. 31). Let us then conceive the Lord Jesus standing now in the midst of us, and, with uplifted hands, pronouncing the benediction in the text; is there one amongst us that would not cordially add, "Amen, Amen"? Nor let this be thought a vain and fanciful idea, since He has promised to be wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, and *that* too for the very purpose which is here expressed. (Compare Matt. xviii. 20, with Exod. xx. 24.)

2. *The ministers are used as instruments to convey blessings; God Himself is the only Author and Giver of them.* The very words which the priests were

commanded to use, directed the attention of all to God Himself; nor could the frequent repetition of Jehovah's name fail to impress the most careless auditor with a conviction, that the blessing could come from God alone. We ought indeed to reverence God's ministers as the authorised dispensers of His blessings (1 Thess. v. 13); but we must look for the blessings themselves to God alone; and endeavour to exercise faith on the Father as the Fountain of them, on Christ as the Channel in which they flow, and on the Holy Spirit as the Agent by whose Divine energy they are imparted to the soul (Rev. i. 4, 5). At the same time we should remember the obligations which these mercies lay us under to devote ourselves entirely to the service of our gracious and adorable Benefactor.

3. *However weak the ordinances be in themselves, yet shall they, if attended in faith, be available for our greatest good.* Nothing can be conceived more simple in itself than a priestly benediction; yet, most undoubtedly it brought down many blessings upon the people. And can we suppose that God will put less honour upon His ordinances under the Gospel dispensation? Shall not "*grace, mercy and peace* flow down from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ," in answer to the fervent intercessions of His ministers? (2 Tim. i. 2). Though ministers be but earthen vessels, yet shall they impart unto the people the richest treasures (2 Cor. iv. 7). Their word shall not be in vain, but shall accomplish God's good pleasure, etc. (Isa. lv. 10, 11). Let not then the benediction be so often slighted, as though it were only a signal to depart: but while it is delivered with solemnity in the name of God, let every heart be expanded to receive the benefit. Let every one consider *himself in particular* as the person addressed ("*thee*" was repeated six times); and may the experience of all attest at this time that God is ready to "grant us above all that we can ask or think."—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the narrative of the presentation of gifts by the princes of the tribes at the dedication of the altar. "This presentation took place at the time (יִי) when Moses, after having completed the erection of the tabernacle, anointed and sanctified the dwelling and the altar, together with their furniture (Lev. viii. 10, 11). Chronologically considered, this ought to have been noticed after Lev. viii. 10. But in order to avoid interrupting the connection of the Sinaitic laws, it is introduced for the first time at this point, and placed at the head of the events which immediately preceded the departure of the people from Sinai, because these gifts consisted in part of materials that were indispensably necessary for the transport of the tabernacle during the march through the desert. Moreover, there was only an interval of at the most forty days between the anointing of the tabernacle, which commenced after the first day of the first month (cf. Exod. xl. 16, and Lev. viii. 10), and lasted eight days, and the departure from Sinai, on the twentieth day of the second month (chap. x. ii), and from this we have to deduct six days for the Passover, which took place before their departure (chap. ix. 1 sqq.); and it was within this period that the laws and ordinances from Lev. xi. to Num. vi. had to be published, and the dedicatory offerings to be presented. Now, as the presentation itself was distributed, according to vers. 11 sqq., over twelve or thirteen days, we may very well assume that it did not entirely precede the publication of the laws referred to, but was carried on in part contemporaneously with it. The presentation of the dedicatory gifts of one tribe-prince might possibly occupy only a few hours of the day appointed for the purpose, and the rest of the day,

therefore, might very conveniently be made use of by Moses for publishing the laws. In this case the short space of a month and a few days would be amply sufficient for everything that took place."—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 2. *The princes of the tribes, and were over them, etc.* Margin: *Who stood over, etc.* Keil and Del: "Those who stood over those that were numbered, i.e., who were their leaders or rulers" (see chap. i. 4-16).

Ver. 3. *Covered wagons.* Gesenius and De Wette translate: "*litter wagons*;" but their rendering "can neither be defended etymologically, nor based upon מִיָּבֵי in Isa. lvi. 20."—*Keil and Del.* The rendering of the LXX is ἀμάξας λαμπηνίκας, which, according to Euseb. Emis. signifies two-wheeled vehicles. Dr. A. Clarke renders: "*tilted wagons*." And Dr. H. E. J. Howard: "*tilted wains*." They use the word tilted in the sense of tented, or, as in the A. V., covered; and this seems to be the meaning of the original.

The service of the sanctuary. Heb. lit., "the holy," i.e., the holy things (see chap. iv. 5-20).

Ver. 10, *In the day.* Keil and Del., "That is, at the time 'that they anointed it.' 'Day,' as in Gen. ii. 4."

Ver. 13. *One silver charger.* A dish, or deep bowl. (See Exod. xxv. 29.) [*One silver bowl.* A basin to receive the blood of the sacrifice in.

Ver. 14. *One spoon.* A censer, on which they placed the incense, as in Exod. xxv. 29.

Ver. 84-86. Attersol (1618) reckons the whole of the dishes, basins, and censers to be worth about £420. Dr. A. Clarke (1836), *in loco*, gives his calculation in detail, and makes the total £627 ls. 11½d. The *Speaker's Comm.* (1871): "If a silver shekel be

taken roughly as weighing 2·5 of a shilling, and a golden shekel 1·15 of a sovereign, the intrinsic worth, by weight of each silver charger, will be 325s., of each bowl 175s., of each golden spoon 230s. Consequently the aggregate worth, by weight, of the whole of the offerings will be £438. But the real worth of such a sum, when measured by the prices of clothing and food at that time, must have been vastly greater. It must not be forgotten, too, that the tabernacle itself had been recently constructed at a vast cost."

AN ANCIENT OFFERING, AND ITS MODERN LESSONS.

(Verses 1-9.)

These verses suggest the following lessons—

1. That they who hold the most honourable positions should be most liberal in contributions to worthy objects.

The princes of the tribes of Israel are here prominent in bringing their offering for the service of the Tabernacle. They present an example well worthy the imitation of those who are exalted in rank, rich in possessions, or great in power. Such persons are under all the ordinary obligations to help forward every good work. They, in common with all men, are required to use their talents, means, and opportunities so as to accomplish the greatest amount of good. They are also under special obligations to advance every true and good cause amongst men, because of the conspicuousness of their position, and the extent of their influence. The extent of our obligations is determined by our opportunities. Privilege is the measure of responsibility. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more."

1. *Great honours should incite to great efforts to do good.* Those upon whom God has bestowed great wealth, or whom He has raised to exalted stations, should manifest their thankfulness by

Ver. 89. *The tabernacle of the congregation.* Heb., "The tent of meeting." *To speak with Him, i.e., with God,* as in the margin; for "the name Jehovah, though not expressly mentioned before, is contained *implicite* in *ohel moed*, 'the tent of meeting.'" *He heard the voice of one speaking.* Rather, "he heard the voice speaking," or "conversing."

Proceeding to our Homiletical treatment of the chapter, we have in the first paragraph—

generously promoting those objects which accord with the Divine will. "The more any are advanced, the more is expected from them, on account of the greater opportunity they have of serving God and their generation. What are wealth and authority good for, but as they enable a man to do so much the more good in the world?"

2. *Great influence involves great obligation.* The example of persons in high station is extensively observed; their exalted position gives conspicuousness to their life and conduct. Their example is also very effective, for persons are generally prone to copy it, when that of persons in lowly stations would be disregarded. So their influence is very great; and the possession of great influence is a sacred and solemn trust. So "superior rank demands superior worth." They who are exalted in station should cultivate the exalted in character and conduct; and so their great influence will be a great blessing.

"Since by your greatness you
Are nearer Heaven in place, be nearer it
In goodness. Rich men should transcend the
poor,
As clouds the earth; raised by the comfort of
The sun, to water dry and barren grounds."
Tourneville. (a)

II. That they who are not entirely engaged in religious ministries should seek to help those who are so engaged.

These princes of the tribes were not set apart for religious duties; but by this offering of wagons and oxen for the service of the tabernacle, they evinced their desire to assist the Levites in discharging their sacred duties. "You know," says Babington, "how the Levites were to carry upon their shoulders the things belonging to the tabernacle when they removed, but now they shall be eased by these chariots and oxen. So the laity careth for the clergy, to help them, to ease them, to comfort them in their duties belonging to God. And O! how could I dwell in the meditation of it a whole day, it is so sweet. Will you note it and think of it? I trust you will, and so I commit it to you." There are still many ways in which Christian men and women may, and in which some of them do, assist their ministers. It is the privilege and duty of every disciple of Christ Jesus to engage in some work for the good of others; and when every one is so engaged, the labours of the ministers of the Gospel, which in some instances are very arduous and continuous, will be much lightened, and from many things, which by reason of the sloth or unreasonableness of the churches they now have to do, though they pertain not to their work, they will then be entirely free. The offering of the princes of the tribes manifests a thoughtfulness and appropriateness, which are well worthy of commendation and imitation. They gave with wise judgment such things as proved most useful in the service of the tabernacle.

(b)

III. That God is graciously pleased to accept of man's offerings.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service." Thus God signifies his acceptance of their offering. Surely it is a great honour which God confers upon us in accepting our gifts in His service. If our heart be sincere, the offering of even the

smallest gift, or the feeblest effort in His cause, He accepts, approves, and, in His great grace, will reward. "Who-soever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Let this be to us an incentive to liberal and hearty giving, and faithful and diligent working in His cause.

IV. That gifts for religious purposes should be used in accordance with the will of God.

"Thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershom, according to their service," etc. The offering was faithfully applied by Moses in such a way as to gratify the wishes of the givers, serve the interests of the people, and comply with the directions of the Lord. Here is a lesson which is very wide in its applications, and which is urgently needed in some quarters to-day. The offerings which are contributed to the cause of God, should be used not for the mere increase and aggrandisement of a sect or party, not for the mere advocacy and spread of any pet notions, favourite theories, or sectarian creeds, but for the promotion of the cause and glory of God in the well-being of humanity. This is attained by doing the largest amount of good in the most Christlike spirit. The money or property, which in past ages, was left for purposes which were then useful and worthy, but which, in the altered circumstances of this age, have very much ceased to be so, should be applied to such purposes as shall be at once productive of the most good to the community, and most nearly in accord with the wishes of the giver, as far as they can be ascertained. To attempt to monopolise such gifts, or restrict the benefits which might be attained by them, on the ground of the wishes of the "pious donor," or

"founder," is, to say the least, utterly unworthy of Christian men.

V. That in the Divine arrangements help is granted unto men according to their respective needs.

"Thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the waggons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites," etc., vers. 5-9. The principle of distribution which Moses adopted, was laid down by God Himself; "Give to every man according to his service." In harmony with this principle, the Merarites, to whom was assigned the most burdensome part of the service (chap. iv. 29-33), received four wagons and eight oxen; the Gershonites, whose service was less burdensome (chap. iv. 21-26), received two wagons and four oxen; while the Kohathites, who had to carry the most holy things upon their shoulders, and were provided with poles for that purpose (chap. iv. 4-20), received neither wagon nor oxen. There is a proportion between the burden imposed and the strength imparted. "God proportions the burden to the back," says Trapp. But it is both more correct and more inspiring to say, God proportions the back to the burden. (Comp. 1 Cor. x. 13, with

2 Cor. xii. 9.) God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, because as the power of temptation increases, He will increase our power of resistance. As our need increases He increases the communications of His grace; and the infinitude of His resources must ever immeasurably surpass our utmost need. And as His knowledge of us and kindness toward us are infinite, we may rest assured that He will not fail to proportion His assistance to our necessities. What an encouragement is this as we look on to the future, with its unknown experiences, its possibilities of sore trial, of insuperably difficult labour, etc. Infinite resources of patience and power, grace and courage, are pledged to us. Apart from Christ we can do nothing; but with the help of the Holy one of Israel even a "worm shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff." (See Isa. xli. 13-16.) "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." "When I am weak, then am I strong;" for Christ's strength is made perfect in His people's weakness. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

- (a) They that are great, and worthy to be so, Hide not their rays from meanest plants that grow.

Why is the sun set on a throne so high,
But to give light to each inferior eye?
His radiant eyes distribute lively grace
To all according to their worth and place;
And from the humble ground these vapours drain,

Which are sent down in fruitful drops of rain.—*Beaumont.*

- (b) We want labourers; persons who can distribute tracts silently, and persons who can speak a word in season; we want rich men who can go in carriages, and poor men who can only walk; we want ladies who are muffled and furred with all the armour of a luxurious civilization, and poor women whose hearts are warm with a glowing love to the Saviour: we want persons who can teach ragged children, and persons who can address ragged men: *Who will come?* Don't oppress those who are working too much already. There is a vast amount of non-productive

energy in the Church. There are men and women voluntarily dumb, *they must speak*; there are Christians who have an enormous talent for sleeping, *they must be awakened*; there are disciples who imagine that their Christian duties are discharged when they have criticised other people, *they must be persuaded or provoked into activity*; as with the body, so with the soul—we cannot do our duty with mere empty words;—"if a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, and be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit?" So with the soul. It is not enough to erect your buildings, you must go out, and with all the gentle violence of love "*compel men to come in.*" You can bring in the millennium when you please; God is waiting; the Redeemer is at hand; "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, until there shall not be room enough to

contain it." That is the challenge; who will accept it? God says He *waits* to be gracious; then let us wait patiently upon God! The rain will come if we pray for it. The battle will be given to Israel if we hold up the hands of His servant.—*Jos. Parker, D.D.*

(c) Christianity boldly, undisguisedly declares to every human being under sin, that he has no complete power beforehand, as in reference to anything really good. And then it calls him to be good, on the express condition always that he is to have powers, stimulants, increments, accruing as he wants them; that on these, or the promise of them, he may rest his faith, and so go forward. It says to the struggling and misgiving penitent, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." It calls every man to earnest and hopeful endeavour, by the consideration of an all-supporting grace that cannot fail; "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." It shows the Christian testifying in sublimity of confidence, "When I am weak, then am I strong; I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." It promises the faithful man all the support needed for his exigencies as they arise, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." It also establishes, in a manner to comprehend everything, a doctrine of Divine concurrence by the Holy Spirit, which carries in it the pledge of all-accruing grace, and light, and might, and holy impulsion; "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." Indeed,

the doctrine or fact of the Holy Spirit is only another way of generalizing the truth that God will co-work invigoratively, correctively, and directively in all the good struggles of believing souls; and so will bring in, at all times and junctures, those increments of power that are necessary to success.

All the simplest, most living, and most genuine Christians of our own time are such as rest their souls, day by day, on this confidence and promise of accruing power, and make themselves responsible, not for what they have in some inherent ability, but for what they can have in their times of stress and peril, and in the continual raising of their own personal quantity and power. They throw themselves on works wholly above their ability, and get accruing power in their works for others still higher and greater. Instead of gathering in their souls timorously beforehand upon the little sufficiency they find in possession, they look upon the great world God has made, and all the greater world of the Saviour's kingdom in it, as being friendly and tributary, ready to pour in help, minister light, and strengthen them to victory, just according to their faith. And so they grow in courage, confidence, personal volume, efficiency of every kind, and instead of slinking into their graves out of impotent lives, they lie down in the honours of heroes.

Go to your duty, every man, and trust yourselves to Christ; for He will give you all supply just as fast as you need it. You will have just as much power as you believe you can have. Be a Christian, throw yourself upon God's work, and get the ability you want in it.—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

THE OFFERINGS FOR DEDICATING THE ALTAR, AND THEIR MORAL SUGGESTIONS.

(Verses 10-88.)

Two introductory points are suggested:

First: *The obligation of man to honour God with his possessions.* The princes of the tribes liberally contributed to the erection and furnishing of the tabernacle, that the Lord might be honoured amongst the people. And all men are under the most solemn obligations to employ their possessions in such a way as to honour God thereby. He is the sole proprietor of all things. "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of hosts." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness

thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." The wealthiest man has nothing that he can really call his own; his relation to his temporal possessions is not that of ownership but of stewardship. In giving to the cause of God, or to the needs of man, we only give God His own. Well did king David say, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." To the "rich in this world" it is a charge from God, "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." And according to his ability every man is required to communicate unto others, and so to distribute his worldly goods, that God

shall be honoured thereby. Our business is not to selfishly hoard, but to generously dispense; not vainly to accumulate, but wisely to use the goods with which God has entrusted us. He will one day call us to give account of our stewardship. What account will the selfish and useless be able to render unto Him? (a)

Second: *The obligation of man to continue in a right and good course.* These princes of the tribes had already liberally contributed to the construction of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxv. 27, 28); they had also presented the wagons and the oxen for its removal from place to place; and now they are offering their gifts for the dedication of the altar. Having begun this good work, they continued therein until it was brought to perfection. As man accustoms himself to give for the promotion of worthy objects, both his *disposition* to give and his *power* to give are increased. His disposition to give is increased; for he learns the joy of giving; he increasingly proves that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." His power to give is also increased; for "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

"There was a man,—some men did count him mad—

The more he gave away the more he had."

Good beginnings must be carried onward to perfect endings. Continuance and progress in duty and service are required from us. Having given much, let us endeavour to give more. Having done well, let us try to do better. "Forgetting those things which are behind," etc. (Phil. iii. 13, 14). "Let us go on unto perfection."

Let us now proceed to consider—

I. The Significance of the Offerings for the Dedication of the Altar.

1. *Their offerings express the sense of equality of obligation.* Every tribe, by its prince, presents the same kind of offering, and in the same quantity,

as an expression of their equal indebtedness to God. By Him they all alike had been emancipated from slavery and cruelty in Egypt; by Him they were all alike protected, provisioned and led; and it was fitting that each should thus testify to their equality of obligation. There are certain mercies which all men have in common; certain Divine gifts which are bestowed upon all men; Christ "died for all" men; and there are certain obligations to God in which all men share. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves," etc.

2. *Their offerings express symbolically the Divine calling of the nation to be holy unto the Lord.* All the vessels presented were for sacrificial uses, all the animals were ceremonially clean and such as were proper for sacrifices; all the other gifts were of the best quality and were to be used in the worship of God. By these things it was indicated that the people were to be a separate people, entirely dedicated to God, and that God was to dwell in their midst. The lesson for us is, that God is to be worshipped with our highest and best. The best of our affections, of our thoughts, of our actions, of our possessions, we should cheerfully consecrate to Him. Beautifully was this illustrated by Mary of Bethany, when, with glowing gratitude and reverent and rapturous love she poured the precious ointment on the head and feet of her adored Lord. (b)

3. *Their offerings express symbolically the great truths taught by the different sacrifices.* They brought a "kid of the goats for a sin-offering." The sin-offering expressed the consciousness of sin on the part of the offerer, the need of forgiveness and atonement with God, and the belief that these were to be obtained through the sacrifice of the appointed victim. They offered "one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering." The burnt-offering was wholly consumed upon the altar to the honour of God; and its main idea is that it represents the entire devotion of the offerer to God, that he

gives himself wholly and for ever to Him. Canon Barry well says that "the best comment upon it is the exhortation in Rom. xii. 1, to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.'" They also brought "for a sacrifice of *peace-offerings*, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs of the first year." The peace-offerings were expressions of the gratitude of the worshipper to God; they "were simply offerings to God of His own best gifts, as a sign of thankful homage, and as a means of maintaining His service and His servants." All these ideas and feelings, therefore, which these sacrifices represent, were expressed in the offerings which the princes, each one representing his respective tribe, presented to the Lord. And should not the ideas and feelings which these offerings were intended to express be ours? Do not we need forgiveness? Let us seek it in faith through the One great Sin-Offering. Are not we under the most sacred and binding obligations to consecrate ourselves entirely unto God? "Know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," etc. Have not we many and moving reasons, for most fervent gratitude to God? "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" Let us present to Him the offering of sincere and ardent praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." (c)

II. The Significance of the Record of the Offerings for the Dedication of the Altar.

It is remarkable that the particulars are given of each offering, in the case of each one of the princes, though each of the offerings was exactly similar to the others. The repetition seems uninteresting, tedious, wearisome. But is there not some reason for this minuteness of statement? In a Book

where subjects of deep interest are mentioned and dismissed sometimes in a few words, a Book moreover which is inspired by God—is there not significance in this wearisome repetition of uninteresting details? What does it mean? It seems to us to suggest—

1. *The pleasure of God in the gifts of His people.* "That everything is so particularly noted," says Babington, "and the weight so precisely mentioned, may teach us to our comfort, what an observation there is in God of the gifts we bestow on Him in promoting His glory, advancing his service, maintaining His ministers in a liberal manner, relieving the poor, and doing such good things as with God and man are praiseworthy. Surely the number, the measure, with all circumstances, are observed; and the Lord is a plenteous Rewarder of all love to Him." "Man may pass hastily or carelessly over gifts and offerings; but God never can, never does, and never will. He delights to record every little act of service, every little loving gift. He never forgets the smallest thing; and not only does He not forget it Himself, but He takes special pains that untold millions shall read the record. How little did those twelve princes imagine that their names and their offerings were to be handed down, from age to age, to be read by countless generations! Yet so it was, for God would have it so." They who honour Him with their offerings, He will honour with His expressed approbation. Mary's offering of her precious ointment is known in all the world where the Gospel is preached (Matt. xxvi. 13). And the widow who cast into the treasury of the temple "all that she had," though that "all" was only "two mites," has been crowned by Christ with similar immortality and fame (Mark xii. 41-44). "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love," etc. (Heb. vi. 10).

2. *The permanence of good works.* When any one does a kind or noble deed, or bestows a generous gift from worthy motives, he does a permanent, an imperishable thing. The breath of

an immortal life is in such deeds. God remembers and will reward them. The grateful heart will for ever cherish the memory of the kind service or generous gift. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." The noble deed shall live, and bring forth fruit. And the doer himself by his deed has gained somewhat of nobility

and strength as a permanent acquisition in his own being. (d)

Conclusion.

Our subject is most fruitful of encouragement to—

1. *Liberality of giving to promote worthy objects.*
2. *Diligence in working to promote worthy objects.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is nothing made for itself, nothing whose powers and influences are entirely circumscribed to self. Whatever a creature receives it gives out, with the modification and increase of its own force. The clouds borrow water of the ocean, but they pour it forth again in refreshing showers upon the thirsty hills, which, in their turn, send them amongst the valleys. Planets borrow light of their centres, and forthwith fling their rays abroad upon the dark regions of space through which they roll. The tree borrows from every part of the world in order to build up itself, but it gives out, in return, beauty, fragrance, and fruit. Thus all things give what they appropriate. The material is but the emblem of the spiritual, and thus all nature typifies man's distributive function. Is not he who appropriates and does not give an anomaly in the universe?—*David Thomas, D.D.*

There is a popular but unfounded axiom respecting the use of wealth, namely, that "a man may do what he will with his own." Christianity denies this assertion. Every man has indeed a legal right to the disposal of his own property; but religion interdicts his right to spend it in vanity or vice; or if he be exempt from these grosser temptations, she still abridges his right to monopolize it. Christianity expects that the deserving and the distressed shall come in for such a proportion of his wealth as an enlightened conscience shall dictate. The Divine Person who refused, in a legal sense, to be a *divider or a judge* over a contested property, did not fall to graft on the question He avoided answering, the imperative caution, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*—*Gleanings.*

It has been found, by persons disposed to distribute of their substance, that they have supposed themselves more liberal than has really been the case. They have seemed to give frequently, and perhaps have done so; and have at times feared that they were exceeding proper bounds, when at last, resolving to set apart a certain portion of their income for the specific object, they have been surprised at the end of the year to find their funds not exhausted, even though their applications had seemed as numerous, as urgent, and as liberally attended to as before.

Let it be remembered that the sums which

some give, however large, may be given without the self-privation of a single worldly comfort, or even of the luxurious enjoyment of the good things of this life, and thence be as *sacrifices that cost nothing.* The Christian had need to enquire in his closet concerning the faithful discharge of his stewardship.—*Ibid.*

(b) The act once taken as an homage to the Saviour, recommends itself to us by the sentiments which appear to have inspired it. That homage is agreeable to Jesus Christ, not only because it is addressed to Him, but because it is worthy of Him. That homage, whatever may be said as to its form, expresses all that a Christian soul must feel for Jesus Christ. What ought we, in truth, to say to that God-man, and what ought we to find in our hearts when we render Him homage? What? Admiration? Respect? An estimation of Him above all sages, all heroes, all men? No! but that as He has given Himself for us, we, in our turn, give ourselves to Him; that we exist for Him; that everything we have is held not for ourselves, but for Him; that no sacrifice on our part appears to bear any proportion to that which He has made for us? and that we are ready to abandon everything for His service and for His glory. Now what is the language of the act of Mary, but all this at once? See her search amongst her whole possessions for the most precious and the most valued thing, that she may consume it in honour of Jesus Christ—for it is truly a loss or waste which she intended to make,—and the objection of the disciples, To what purpose is this waste? expresses the true meaning of the act better than they imagined. It was not enough to employ this perfume if she did not expend it wholly. And since it is to lose or waste it to pour it all out at once over the head of Jesus Christ, she resolves to waste it. She is better pleased to waste it by consecrating it directly to the honour of Jesus Christ than to employ it more usefully, perhaps, in another way. Ah! this perfume was doubtless the most precious thing she could find in her stores! Doubtless if she had possessed a single thing more precious, she would have preferred to sacrifice it, since, not content with having in a moment bestowed so valuable an object, she broke (needless sacrifice) the alabaster vase

in which the ointment was contained. It was then that Judas might cry out with displeasure, "To what purpose is this waste?" since the perfume spread around might minister gratification, but not the broken box. But in this the character of the first of these acts might be misapprehended. Mary had in view in pouring out like water this perfumed ointment, not to afford pleasure, but to subject herself to a loss. She wished at once to express and to prove her feeling that nothing was so dear to her as her Saviour, that she was prepared for all sacrifices for His sake, and that, not having it in her power to make all sacrifices at once, she made that the opportunity of which presented itself, that which was at once a sacrifice and an act of homage. She united in one act the reality and the symbol—she gave and she adored. It was with this view she poured out the ointment, it was with this view she broke the box. And has she no other sacrifice to make for the sake of Him who for her gave up everything, sacrificed everything? Cannot she devote herself? She did so, my brethren, she did this at the moment when the perfumed ointment flowed in streams over the blessed forehead of her Master. She broke another vase whence issued odours still more sweet. She broke her own penitent heart; and grief, love, and hope, perfumes more exquisite than spikenard, myrrh, and incense, spread themselves around and filled the house. You perceived nothing of this, O, intolerant disciples! in vain is this perfume spread around you; but your Master has breathed it; He has understood an action incomprehensible by your proud hearts; He has seen the sorrow of heart of that poor Mary; He has discerned the tears of her repentance, which perhaps could not get outward vent, roll drop by drop from her heart; He knows the secret of that mute grief;—the Saviour and the sinner understand each other, and there passes between them, silently, something sublime, something ineffable, which you will not be able to comprehend unless you, yourselves, come, transported with sorrow and love, to pour perfumes also on the head of Jesus, to shed tears at His feet, and to break your hearts before Him.—*Alex. Vinet, D.D.*

(c) Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. Had not David

a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work? Doth it not sometimes raise our hearts, when we only read the Song of Moses, and the Psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us to be skilful and frequent in the work ourselves! Oh, the loss to many of the saints who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves, both in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! Instead of being employed in the praises of God, they are questioning their worthiness, and studying their miseries, and so rob God of His glory, and themselves of their consolation.—*Gleanings.*

(d) There is nothing, no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten: let us hold to that faith, or none. An infant, a prattling child, dying in its cradle, will live again in the better thoughts of those who loved it; and play its part, through them, in the redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes, or drowned in the deepest sea. There is not an angel added to the host of heaven but does its blessed work on earth in those that loved it here. Forgotten! oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautiful would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves.—*Charles Dickens.*

Thousands of men breathe, move, and live, pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? They do not partake of good in the world, and none were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spake, could be recalled; and so they perished; their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name in kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of thousands you come in contact with year by year; you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as the stars of heaven.—*Chalmers.*

THE SUPPORT OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

(Verse 88.)

"This was the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed."

In this chapter we see how the altar was dedicated; and we learn that God expects His people to provide for and

to carry on His work. This dedication of the altar

I. Suggests to us some of the responsibilities of the wealthy.

Wealth is a talent. God will demand

an account of it. He holds the wealthy responsible—

1. *To give of their wealth to carry on His work.* God claims a share of all we get; how much that shall be He leaves to our conscience. He looks not so much at the amount as at the motive. He measures our gifts by our hearts. To Christ the “two mites” was the greatest offering in the Treasury of the Temple for that reason. God expects us to take care of His house and work; not to do so is a sin. David was in distress because he lived in a better house than the Ark of God had; that is the right feeling. Surely we ought to take as good care of God’s house as of our own. Were it so, the treasury of God’s house would never be empty.

2. *To take the lead in doing good—to be examples in giving.* The wealthy are looked up to; if they fail to do their duty, not only do they fail to do good, but they also check and prevent others from doing so.

II. Is a striking illustration of the voluntary principle.

It teaches us the true method of giving for the support of religious institutions.

1. *God has left His work to be carried on by His people.*

2. *The voluntary principle is the most effective for doing this.* (1) Because conscience is brought into action by it: giving becomes an act of worship. (2) Because man is then on his honour. (3) As a matter of fact it has never failed. See how much it produced here in the wilderness. The Church in the present age supplies ample proof of its success. (a)

3. *God is greatly pleased with it.* He approves of it. Read ver. 89 with the text. He approves—(1) Because voluntary giving evinces real interest in His work—shows that it is done from love. The free-will offering is a good gauge of the people’s hearts and interest. (2) He will accept nothing that is done from constraint. (3) He testifies to His pleasure, in His Word and by blessing those who so help His work. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Those who give to God are ever blessed by Him. Our Master pays well; we never lose by serving Him faithfully. “He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” —David Lloyd.

ILLUSTRATION.

(a) In Scotland, during the last seventeen years (1861), an experiment has been made on a large scale of the power of the voluntary principle, and made, too, by men who had but little faith in it at first. Of course, I now refer to the “Free Church of Scotland.” The alternative was placed before the Church of Scotland, to give up their rights of self-government or to give up State pay. And 478 ministers and professors said, We will give up the pay, we will be free, whatever may be the result. They left their homes, and the churches in which their fathers had worshipped, trusting in God to provide for them. And what the results have been I am now about to lay before you. Let us first look at what they have done, in sixteen years, in the way of providing accommodation for religious worship. They have built—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
800 Churches at an average cost of.....	918	6	0	total	734	641 1 2
565 Mansees, ditto.....	600	0	0		323,000	0 0
620 Schools, ditto.....	365	0	0		297,700	0 0
Carried forward				1,281,341	1	2

Brought forward	£128,341	1	2
Edinburgh College, total cost	34,879	5	1
Glasgow College, “ “	11,220	0	0
Aberdeen College, “ “	2,350	0	0
Edinburgh and Glasgow Normal Schools	22,534	9	6
A sabbath Hall and site, Edinburgh ..	8,500	0	0
Church Offices in Mound place	7,500	0	0
Churches, Mansees, Schools, erected at the expense of individuals, not appearing in the public accounts	50,000	0	0
Aggregate cost of buildings	£142,134	15	9

From this large amount of money spent in buildings, there are two small deductions to be made. First, the existing debt upon them is estimated at £90,000; and second, towards the erection of the schools they have received £20,000 from the Government. Deducting these there is the noble sum of £131,234 15s. 9d. left, which in sixteen years the Free Church of Scotland has invested in lime, stone, and land! Let us now look at the ministry of the Free Church. There were 478 ministers who left their emoluments and status in the Established Church. In the first year of the Free Church

each of these received a stipend from £105 and upwards. In the year 1859 the number of ministers had increased to 784, and the lowest stipend was then £138. Besides which, 565 of them had a pleasant manse, built by the free-will offerings of the people.

But perhaps it may be thought that all the energies of the Free Church have been confined to building churches and schools, and providing for their own wants at home; but this has not been the case. They have been doing much for others in various ways, and in many lands. Allow me to read you the income for the year 1859, for various religious objects:—

Bairding Fund, General and Local ...	£50,519 16 0½
Sustentation Fund	126,281 14 6
Congregational Fund	94,481 19 6
Education Fund	17,764 15 3
College Fund	9,000 8 5
General Trustees and Miscellaneous...	56,619 4 7½
Carried forward.....	334,668 18 4

Brought forward	£334,668 18 4
Glasgow Evangelisation.....	2,539 11 1
Missions to the Highland	1,314 3 2
Missions to the Colonies	4,487 15 9
Missions to the Continent.....	2,456 19 8
Foreign Missions	19,210 2 6
Missions to the Jews	7,673 13 3

Making a total income for 1859 of £342,723 12 4½

You will see from these figures that the zeal of the Free Church is expansive. If they begin at home they do not stay there. From the year 1843 to 1859, a period of sixteen years, the Free Church raised for all purposes £4,883,132 12s. 6½d. And after sixteen years' experience the income of the Free Church still increases. "Leaving out of view the building funds which are temporary, the aggregate of all the other funds has been steadily, year by year, increasing; so that the yearly average of the last five years is twenty-five per cent. above the yearly average of the first five years."—*Marmaduke Miller*.

THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD AND THE PRIVILEGES OF MAN.

(Verse 89.)

Already the Lord had promised Moses that He would meet with him, and commune with him from above the mercy-seat (Exod. xxv. 22); and now He fulfils that promise. The tribes had cheerfully contributed everything necessary for the tabernacle and its sacred services! and now the Most High acknowledges His acceptance of their offerings by manifesting His Presence in thus speaking to Moses in the holy of holies. Let us consider,—

1. The great condescension of God.

"When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the Voice of One speaking unto him," etc. Moses heard the Voice conversing with him. Great is the condescension of the Lord in thus speaking with Moses, and through Moses to the people. Let us notice here—

1. The sacred place in which He speaks.

It was in the holy of holies in "the tabernacle of meeting." It was in this place that he had promised to meet with His servant. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee," etc. He is represented as dwelling in this place, and as enthroned between the cherubim. It was the place of His

special self-manifestation. God is everywhere present.

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and gather blackberries."

The thoughtful and reverent mind beholds signs of the presence and activity of God on every hand. We see his glory in the countless orbs of heaven, and in the exquisite pencillings and perfumes of the flowers of earth, etc. But still He specially manifests Himself to man in His house. In the proclamation of the glorious Gospel, in the administration of the holy sacraments, and in the presentation of reverent worship to Him, man most often and fully realises the presence and hears the Voice of God (compare Exod. xx. 24; 2 Chron. vi. 18; and Matt. xviii. 20).

2. The grand medium through which He speaks.

"Speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims." The mercy-seat was "the massive golden cover of the ark of the covenant, on which the glory of Jehovah appeared between the cherubim. It was that upon which especially the

blood of the propitiatory sacrifice was sprinkled on the day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 15), and from this circumstance apparently, the propitiation taking place on it, it obtained its name of *ἱλαστήριον*. It was the footstool of God (1 Chron. xxviii. 2 ; Ps. xcix. 5). The spot where He, the God of the covenant, met with Israel, the people of the covenant." It is also called "the oracle" (1 Kings vi. 19, 20, 23). Now the mercy-seat is an illustration, perhaps a type, of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true Mercy-seat, the Divine *ἱλαστήριον* (Rom. iii. 25). By the shedding of His blood, the great atonement for the sins of the world was made. In Him God draws near to man, and communes with him. He is the true Divine Oracle; through Him the most precious revelations of God have been made; in Him we hear the voice of God most clearly and graciously (Heb. i. 1-3).

3. *The gracious purpose for which He speaks.* In this instance, the voice from between the cherubim doubtless announced to Moses the gracious acceptance by Jehovah of the cheerful offerings of the princes of the tribes; and intimated that He had taken up His abode in their midst. All the utterances of God are for the benefit of man. Even the proclamation of His law is an expression of His benevolence to our race. "Law is love defined." "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just, and good." But how gracious are His utterances to us by Christ Jesus! "All wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." "Never man spake like this Man." "The words that I speak unto you are spirit, and are life." "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The grand purpose for which God speaks to us through Christ is that we might be saved from sin, and restored to the perfect likeness and the intimate fellowship of Himself. Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the Word of God; He is the fullest, grandest, most eloquent expression of the Divine love; and the great object of His incarnation was the

redemption of man from evil, and the conference upon him of eternal and blessed life. How great is the condescension of God in all this. (a)

II. The great privileges of man.

Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Jehovah, and he heard the voice conversing with him: and he spake unto Him. Here is a twofold privilege which through Jesus Christ every man may enjoy:—

1. *We may speak unto God.* He invites us to do so, and promises us a gracious audience. "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (See Isa. lxx. 24; Dan. ix. 20-23; Mal. iii. 16, 17; Matt. xviii. 19, 20; John xvi. 23-27.) In all ages godly souls have proved the reality and the preciousness of this privilege. In time of grief or gladness, of perplexity or penitence, of doubt or dread, of triumph or tribulation, we may speak unto God in praise or prayer, or in the silent language of the heart, which He perfectly comprehends, assured that He will hear us graciously, and bless us generously. Blessed privilege! (b)

2. *We may receive communications from God.* The soul which, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, is brought into sympathy with Him, receives communications from Him through many voices. In the melodies and minstrel-sies of nature such a soul hears with reverent delight the Divine music of the Father's voice. We receive messages from Him through the sacred Scriptures, through the operations of His providence, and through the mysterious and gracious ministry of His Spirit. And how precious and helpful are His communications! Pardon to the guilty, peace to the penitent, joy to the sorrowful, direction to the perplexed, hope to the despondent, etc. Unspeakably great and blessed are our privileges. (c)

III. The consequent duty of man.

The possession of privileges always involves corresponding obligations. Since man possesses these privileges, it becomes his duty—

1. *To wait upon God in His house.* No one can neglect public worship without sinning against his own soul and God.

2. *To address God in His house.* Since He invites us to do so, we cannot neglect the privilege of uniting in praise and prayer without sin.

3. *To listen for the Voice of God in His house.* The wise and godly soul resorts to the temple of God not to be charmed with the eloquence, or stimulated by the reasoning, or moved by the pathos of the preacher; not to be gratified by the spectacles of a gorgeous ritualism, or delighted by the musical performances of professional choirs; but with humble reverence to speak to God, and with devout attention to listen to His voice. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A king might have the whole of his reign crowded with the enterprises of his glory; and by the might of his arms, and the wisdom of his counsels, might win the first reputation among the potentates of the world, and be idolized throughout all his provinces for the wealth and the security that he had spread around them—and still it is conceivable, that by the act of a single day in behalf of a single family; by some soothing visitation of tenderness to a poor and solitary cottage; by some deed of compassion, which conferred enlargement and relief on one despairing sufferer; by some graceful movement of sensibility at a tale of wretchedness; by some noble effort of self-denial, in virtue of which he subdued his every purpose of revenge, and spread the mantle of a generous oblivion over the fault of the man who had insulted and aggrieved him; above all, by an exercise of pardon so skilfully administered, as that, instead of bringing him down to a state of defencelessness against the provocation of future injuries, it threw a deeper sacredness over him, and stamped a more inviolable dignity than ever on his person and character:—why, on the strength of one such performance, done in a single hour, and reaching no farther in its immediate effects than to one house or one individual, it is a most possible thing, that the highest monarch upon earth might draw such a lustre around him, as would eclipse the renown of all his public achievements—and that such a display of magnanimity, or of worth, beaming from the secrecy of his familiar movements, might awaken a more cordial veneration in every bosom, than all the splendour of his conspicuous history—ay, and that it might pass down to posterity as a more enduring monument of greatness, and raise him farther, by its moral elevation, above the level of ordinary praise; and when he passes in review before the men of distant ages, may this deed of modest, gentle, unobtrusive virtue, be at all times appealed to as the most sublime and touching memorial of his name.

In like manner did the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, surrounded as He is with the splendours of a wide and everlasting monarchy, turn Him to our humble habitation; and the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh, have been on the narrow spot of ground we occupy; and small though our mansion be amid the orbs and the systems of immensity, hither hath the King of glory bent His mysterious way, and entered the tabernacle of men, and in the disguise of a servant did He sojourn for years under the roof which canopies our obscure and solitary world. Yes, it is but a twinkling atom in the peopled infinity of worlds that are around it—but look to the moral grandeur of the transaction, and not to the material extent of the field upon which it was executed—and from the retirement of our dwelling-place, there may issue forth such a display of the Godhead, as will circulate the glories of His name amongst all His worshippers. Here sin entered. Here was the kind and universal beneficence of a Father repaid by the ingratitude of a whole family. Here the law of God was dishonoured, and that too in the face of its proclaimed and unalterable sanctions. Here the mighty contest of the attributes was ended—and when justice put forth its demands, and truth called for the fulfilment of its warnings, and the immutability of God would not recede by a single iota from any one of its positions, and all the severities He had ever uttered against the children of iniquity, seemed to gather into one cloud of threatening vengeance on the tenement that held us—did the visit of the only begotten Son chase away all these obstacles to the triumph of mercy—and humble as the tenement may be, deeply shaded in the obscurity of insignificance as it is, among the stately mansions which are on every side of it—yet will the recall of its exiled family never be forgotten, and the illustration that has been given here of the mingled grace and majesty of God will never lose its place among the themes and the acclamations of eternity.—*Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*

(b) Prayer is not asking for something. I have nothing to ask for since I have known what God's fatherhood meant. I have but one petition, and that is, "Thy will be done." It is not for me to wake the sun. It is not for me to call the summer. It is not for me to ask for colours in the heavens. All these things are abundantly provided. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and I am God's beloved. He died for me by His Son Jesus Christ. He thinks of me. Do I ever forget my children? Shall a mother forget her baby, cradled in her arms, by day or by night? And shall God forget us in that great rolling sea of His thoughts, in that everlasting fecundity of His love, in the infinite bound of the Divine tenderness and mercy for man? Is there anything left to ask for? When I am tired I carry my weariness there, and lay it down. When I am in sorrow, I am glad when I think of the Sorrowing One. The God of all comfort is my God. When my burden is heavy, it is not so heavy as was His cross. Ten thousand thoughts of this kind that spring from every side of human experience and touch human life in every part—these are elements of prayer. So that when I pray, I rejoice; as the Apostle would say, "Giving thanks in prayer." Prayer is cheerful to me. Prayer is sweet to me; it is not ascetic. I know that I am wicked; I know that I grieve God; I know that there are times when I am glad to say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" So there are times for the majesty of storms in summer. But thunderstorms do not march in procession all the way across the bosom of the summer. There is more brightness than darkness, more tranquil fruitfulness than agitation and thunder.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) What we want in this English land, and down in the midst of this busy nineteenth century—want as a gain that would be to us as life from the dead, is a firm persuasion of God's presence with our human affairs, and of His influence, not only about us, but within us. If He be not thus present with us, where can be the object—the rationality of prayer? Religious men of all creeds have been praying men—must pray. In fact, the Light of the World is ever knocking at the door, now by frustrating our fond earthly schemes, now by bringing us face to face with the judgment-seat through disease or accident; now summoning us to look upon our loved ones dead—in a thousand ways like these does the Incarnate One appeal to our susceptibilities of religious life, and we hearken to His voice, and bid Him welcome, or we heed Him not, and bid Him go His way until some more convenient season. We have to do with a living God. We are in the midst of a living universe. Influences between heaven and earth, like the figures seen on the mystic ladder, are constantly descending and ascending, and

spirits have been passing through all time, like an ever-widening stream of light, from this lower world to the higher, where the Highest Himself receives them as His own.—*Robert Vaughan, D.D.*

(d) Hear the Word with constant *self-application*. Hear not for others, but for yourselves. What should we think of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the feast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without tasting a single article? Such, however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of meeting with something suited to your particular state; something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions; mortify your easily-besetting sin, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be sufficient to give you that insight into your character, which will teach what you need; what the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed, and on what account you feel most shame and humiliation before God. Every one may know, if he pleases, the *plague* of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold upon what is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a personal thing, an individual concern; for every one of us must give an account of *himself* to God, and every man bear his own burden.

Receive with meekness the engrained Word, which is able to save your souls. If you choose to converse with your fellow-Christians on what you have been hearing, a practice which, if rightly conducted, may be very edifying, let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty and glory, of these great things of God which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of that great Apostle; any more than the three thousand, who at the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart; their minds were too much occupied by the momentous truths they had been listening to, to leave room for such reflections. Yet this is the only kind of religious conversation (if it deserves the application) in which too many professors engage. "Give me," says the incomparable Fenelon, "the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the Word of God, as makes me desirous of hearing it from any mouth."—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

MAN'S ACCESS TO GOD, AND GOD'S WORD TO MAN.

(Verse 89.)

The high priest alone had access to the holy of holies; he alone could approach the mercy-seat, and there enjoy the immediate and special presence of God. But Moses seems to have been an exceptional case; a privileged person; for he was permitted to approach God in a way, and to an extent, which was the peculiar privilege of the high priest alone. This may be explained by the fact that Moses was a subordinate mediator between God and Israel in the desert; he is called a mediator in one of the epistles of the New Testament. And that would show that he had an office, an elevation, and a relationship to God, which none else had in that economy, and which gave him, therefore, privileges which none else were permitted to enjoy. But now every Christian has all the right that Moses had. The humblest believer in the house of God is a priest in the truest and only existing sense of the word; and has access as a priest into the immediate presence of God (comp. Eph ii. 18).

What was this way of access by which Moses drew near to God, and by which we draw near? There never was but one, there never will be but one way by which fallen man can draw near to God—Christ the way, the truth, and the life. The mode of revealing it has differed, but the way itself has always been the same. Moses did not see it as clearly as we do, but he trod the same path, nevertheless.

When Moses approached to God, what was the object that he had first in view? Moses drew near to Him to speak to Him. But to speak how? No doubt about it, to pray. And to speak in what manner? No doubt in the name of Jesus, with all freedom (see Heb. iv. 14-16). Moses went into the presence of God to tell Him what the wants, the sorrows, the sufferings, the fears, the difficulties of Israel were.

We, too, are welcome to go into the very chancel of the universe, into the very presence of Deity, and to tell God our least and our worst cares; for there is no trouble so trivial that God will refuse to listen to it, and there is no trouble so bitter and so burdensome that God will not either remove or give strength to bear.

Not only did Moses go to speak to God, but we read that God spoke to him. I know not which is most precious; that we may speak to God, or that God has spoken to us (Heb. i. 1, 2). Many persons think it strange that God should give a revelation of Himself to us. It would seem, on the contrary, that it would be strange if God did not give us a revelation of Himself. If it be true that we have lost Him, that we cannot by any searching find Him, is it not reasonable—is it not probable that the Father of us all should tell us where He is, what He is, who we are, and whither we are going? Does not the father instruct the children? Does not ripe age warn and teach unripe youth? The Great Father will teach His children, etc.

But how and by whom has God spoken to us? Moses says it was from the mercy-seat, and from between the cherubim. What was that the symbol of? The Apostle tells us, in his epistle to the Romans (iii. 25), "Propitiation," literally, "Mercy-seat." When God, therefore, spoke from the mercy-seat, and from between the cherubim, where the *Shecinah* or the glory shone, it was speaking then, translated into New Testament language, by Christ, the Mediator between God and us. All that can be known of God, He has made known; all that can be seen of God, He is; all that can be heard of God, He speaks. Christ thus is the medium of this communication.

The Book that the Spirit inspired—the Bible—is the depository of what

God said from between the cherubim ; or, translated into our language, what God spoke by Jesus Christ. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Whatever is not in the Bible, however true, is not essential to salvation ; whatever contradicts the Bible, however popular, is not true. But all that is in the Bible is profitable for instruction, for correction in righteousness ; for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. It is the Word perpetuated in ceaseless echoes along the centuries as God spake it in and by Christ Jesus.

We may presume that the Book thus inspired is at least an intelligible Book. There is not a more intelligible book than the Bible. It is not asserted that every word of the Book is plain ; but if there be darkness, it is because of the infinitude of the subject, and our imperfection ; not because of the inadequacy of the writer or the Inspirer of it. Finite minds cannot comprehend all-infinite truth. We must, therefore, expect that there will be some pages difficult, because the subjects are infinite ; but we do find that the passages that relate to our personal well-being are so plain, that he who reads may run while he reads.

The preacher, or the minister, is simply the expositor of this Book. He is not to add to it, nor is he to subtract from it ; but he is simply to set it

forth, to explain allusions to customs that have passed away ; to set its truths in clear light, applying them to modern circumstances, and to the varying phases of every social system.

We have reason to believe that this revelation is God's last communication to man in this dispensation (Heb. i. 1, 2). We cannot add to it ; it is not a *discovery* which man has made, and man can mend ; but a *revelation* which God has given, and which man, therefore, cannot improve.

God spoke "from between the cherubim." Angels desire to look into these things. They are hearers ; we are actors. They can afford to look ; but we cannot afford to be passive spectators. It is to us it is spoken ; it is about us that God speaks ; our responsibility is increased by hearing it.

And what God has put in this Book is of infinite importance. God has not bowed the heavens to make known an idle or a useless tale. It is of infinite value, unspeakably precious. If so, let us be thankful we have heard it, that we have the Word uncorrupted, a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. And if we are thankful for it, how diligently, how devoutly should we study it ! And, appreciating this blessed Book ourselves, we ought to circulate and spread it among all mankind.—*John Cumming, D.D.*

THE CHERUBIM AND THE MERCY-SEAT.

(Verse 89.)

Surely there was some design in bringing together all these different objects into one great symbol or type ; —the tables of the law, the covering of the mercy-seat, the representation of the cherubim, and the glory of God, the cloud of the Divine presence surmounting them. They teach us that betwixt law and grace ; betwixt the administration of grace to man and the heavenly world ; and betwixt the whole of this dispensation and arrangement, and the glorious manifested presence of

Jehovah, there is a close and interesting connexion.

I. There is now a relation betwixt law and grace.

Why are the tables of the law, which were "a witness against" the people (Deut. xxxi. 26), placed in the sanctuary where everything spake of mercy ? (1 Kings viii. 9).

1. *Because the law is eternal, and must therefore harmonise with every dispensation of religion to man.* The whole Gospel is founded upon the eternity of

the law; for if its authority did not continue, we could not sin against it, and should therefore need no mercy. The very nature of the law bears with it internal evidence that it must endure for ever; it is holy, and just, and good. Wherever, then, you look for the Gospel you will find the law.

2. *Because it was the violation of the law by which the dispensation of mercy was rendered necessary.* If man had never sinned, there would have been no need of sacrifice, no need of mediation. The very Gospel implies our guilt. The tables are put into the ark to teach us, that if they were not there, we could expect nothing but the law's malediction, and the execution of its sentence.

3. *To intimate to us that the grand end of the administration of grace to man is the re-establishment of the law's dominion over him.* The grand end of this dispensation is certainly, in the first instance, to deliver us from the guilt and penalty of sin; and then, in the next place, by the almighty grace of Christ, to implant within us principles which the influences of the Spirit shall carry on to maturity, that we may be filled with all the fruits of righteousness for ever.

4. *To indicate that the administration of grace is in every part consistent with law.* The mercy-seat was God's throne of grace founded upon law. It was sprinkled with the blood of atonement (comp. Rom. iii. 25, 26; Heb. ix. 13, 14; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Isa. liii. 5). . . . Wherever these three principles unite—that the righteous character of the Governor is upheld; that men are deterred from offences; that the authority of the law is maintained, and its purity and excellence declared;—there is a righteous government; and such is the government of God, even while He is abundant in mercy, waiteth to be gracious, and is ever ready to forgive.

11. There is an harmonious relation betwixt the dispensation of grace to man and the heavenly world.

Over the mercy-seat the cherubim were placed. Cherubim are placed

before us in Scripture under two views. First, they are presented to us as the ministers of Divine vengeance (Gen. iii. 24). But in the tabernacle, from the very position in which they were placed, hiding the ark with their wings, "shadowing the mercy-seat," bending, as if looking down upon it, they are represented as interested spectators of the administration of the grace of God to men, through the atonement and sacrifice of the Saviour.

1. *Angelic powers have an intellectual interest in this great subject.* (Comp. 1 Peter i. 12.)

2. *The connexion of the angelic world with the Christian system is likewise one of large and important moral benefit.* We may fairly infer this from Eph. iii. 10. If to any being already pure, brighter views of God, more important degrees of moral knowledge be communicated, such communications of knowledge must always be the instrument of an increase both of holiness and felicity. And there must be great subjects with which the angels must become better acquainted than they ever could have been, but for the occurrences and history of our redemption. We may see this in relation to the evil of sin, the love of God, the power of God, the power of grace in man, etc.

3. *Angelic beings are ministers to the Church and ministers to individuals* (see Colos. i. 20; Heb. i. 14.) God Himself is the Friend of those who are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ; and all His agents, whether angels or men, are ministers to do them good (Rom. viii. 28.)

III. There was the presence of God crowning the whole.

In the sanctuary was the visible symbol of the Divine presence. Thus are we shown that all things are of Him, and by Him, and for Him (2 Chron. vi. 41). As creation is from the will of God, so is redemption. All is the result of His benevolence (2 Cor. v. 18).

This indicates, too, the necessity of Divine agency. As He originated the

whole scheme of redemption, so must He be present with it to give it power and efficacy. This was felt under the law (comp. Ps. lxxx. 1, 2; cxxxii. 8, 9). As the most beautiful arrangements of the temple would have been insufficient without the cloud of the Divine presence, so, unless God be especially present, even with Christianity, it cannot profit.

The whole points out the everlasting

presence of God with His Church (comp. Isa. xii. 6; Ps. cxxxii. 13-16).

The people of God dwell already in the outer courts; but they are waiting till they shall be permitted to pass "within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for them entered." There God Himself shall be with them, and be their God for ever and ever.—*Richard Watson.*

CHAPTER VIII.

Critical and Explanatory Notes.

Verses 1-4. (Compare Exod. xxv. 31-40; xxvii. 20, 21; xxxvii. 17-24; xl. 24, 25). Here we have the command to actually light the lamps, and the statement of its fulfilment. "When Aaron is commanded to attend to the lighting of the candlestick, so that it may light up the dwelling, in these special instructions the entire fulfilment of the service in the dwelling is enforced upon him as a duty. In this respect the instructions themselves, coupled with the statement of the fact that Aaron had fulfilled them, stand quite appropriately between the account of what the tribe-princes had done for the consecration of the altar service as representatives of the congregation, and the account of the solemn inauguration of the Levites in their service in the sanctuary."—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 5-22. Before entering upon their duties the Levites were to be consecrated to the office, and then formerly handed over to the priests.

Verse 6. *Cleanse them*, טָהַר; not קָדַשׁ, to hallow or sanctify, used of the consecration of the priests (Exod. xxix. 1; Lev. viii. 12).

Verse 7. *Water of purifying*. Lit., "sin-water." The water used for the cleansing of persons cured of leprosy (Lev. xiv. 5), and the "water of separation" (chap. xix. 9), were both of them prepared with peculiar and significant ingredients. The "sin-water;" i.e., water designed to cleanse from sin, was

doubtless taken from the water in the laver of the sanctuary, which was provided for the purification of the priests before they entered upon the performance of their duties (Exod. xxx. 17-21).

Let them shave all their flesh. Margin: "Let them cause a razor to pass over," etc. Keil and Del.: "They shall cause the razor to pass over their whole body, הַעֲבִיר תֵּעָר is to be distinguished from גָּלַה. The latter signified to make bald or shave the hair entirely off (Lev. xiv. 8, 9); the former signifies merely cutting the hair, which was part of the regular mode of adorning the body."

Verse 10. *The children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites*. The princes of the tribes would do this as the representatives of their respective tribes. By this act they represented the transfer to the Levites of the sacred duties which were previously obligatory upon the whole nation in the persons of its first-born sons.

Verse 11. *And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering*. Lit., as in margin: "Shall wave the Levites before the Lord (as) a wave-offering." "How this was to be done is not determined. Most likely, Aaron pointed to the Levites, and then waved his hands, as in ordinary cases of making this offering. The multitude of the Levites seems to preclude the other modes suggested, e.g., causing them to march backwards and forwards before the altar, or taking them round

it. The ceremony of waving indicated (cf. Lev. vii. 30) that the offering was dedicated to God, and again, by grant from Him, withdrawn for the use of the priests. It was therefore aptly used at the inauguration of the Levites."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 12. *The Levites shall lay their hands*, etc. "By this imposition of hands, they made the sacrificial animals their representatives, in which they presented their own bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice, well pleasing to Him."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 16. *The firstborn of all the children of Israel*. Heb.: "The first-born of every one of the," etc.

Verse 19. *To make an atonement for the children of Israel*. "I.e., by performing those services which were due from the children of Israel; the omission of which by the children of Israel would, but for the interposition of the Levites, have called down wrath from God."—*Speaker's Comm.*

That there be no plague among the children of Israel, etc., by reason of any irreverent, or otherwise improper performance of sacred duties, or any trifling

with sacred things. (Compare chapter i. 53.)

Verse 21. *And the Levites were purified*. More correctly: "Purified themselves."

Verse 24. *To wait upon the service of*, etc. Heb., as in margin: "To war the warfare of," etc. Keil and Del.: "To do service at the work of," etc.

Verse 25. *Shall cease waiting upon the service*. Heb., as in margin: "Return from the warfare of the service." Keil and Del.: "Return from the service of the work, and not work any further."

Verse 26. *To keep the charge, and shall do no service*. "Charge, as distinguished from *work*, signified the oversight of all the furniture of the tabernacle (see chap. iii.); *work* (service) applied to laborious service, e.g., the taking down and the setting up of the tabernacle, and cleaning it, carrying wood and water for the sacrificial worship, slaying the animals for the daily and festal sacrifices of the congregation," etc.—*Keil and Del.*

Proceeding to view the chapter homiletically, in the first paragraph we have:

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK, AN EMBLEM OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(Verses 1-4.)

The Golden Candlestick was part of the furniture of the Holy place, and was placed on the South side of that apartment. The full description of the candlestick is given in Exod. xxv. 31-40; xxxvii. 17-24. According to the Rabbins, the height of it was five feet, and the breadth of it, or the distance between the outer branches, three and a half feet. During the night the whole of the seven lamps were kept burning, but in the day there were only three. The weight of the entire candlestick was a talent, or one hundred and twenty-five pounds. It has been calculated to have been worth £5,076. Regarding the candlestick as an emblem of the Church, the text suggests—

I. The Preciousness and Sacredness of the Church of God.

The candlestick was of pure beaten gold, so also were the snuffers and snuff-dishes. Much of the furniture of the sanctuary was made of pure gold—the mercy-seat, the cherubim, the dishes, spoons, covers, bowls, the pot which contained the manna; and many of the larger things were overlaid with gold (Exod. xxv. 10-39). In so large a use of this, the costliest and most perfect of all metals, we have an intimation of the preciousness of the Church of God, and all its belongings. The people of God are highly esteemed by Him. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold." "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people." See

Isa. xlix. 15, 16; Mal. iii. 16, 17; Acts xx. 28; 2 Tim. ii. 19.) "But the mere costliness of gold," says Archbishop Trench, "that it was of all metals the rarest, and therefore the dearest, this was not the only motive for the predominant employment of it. Throughout all the ancient East there was a sense of sacredness attached to this metal, which still to a great extent survives. Thus 'golden' in the Zend-Avesta is throughout synonymous with heavenly or divine. So also in many Eastern lands while silver might be degraded to profane and every-day uses of common life, might as money pass from hand to hand, 'the pale and common drudge 'twixt man and man,' it was not permitted to employ gold in any services except only royal and divine." The Church of God is a sacred institution. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," etc. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

II. The Light of the Church of God.

The light in the holy place is an emblem of the Word of God in His Church. His Word, His truth, including in this all which He has declared of Himself in revealed religion, is the light of the Church. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Like its Divine Author, the Word of God is light in itself. "God has ordained His Gospel," says Milton, "to be the revelation of His power and wisdom in Christ Jesus. Let others, therefore, dread and shun the Scriptures for their darkness; I shall wish I may deserve to be reckoned amongst those who admire and dwell upon them for their clearness. There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach." The

Word of God gives light to others, as the lamps on the candlestick gave light to the priests in the holy place. "It is a book full of light and wisdom," says Sir Matthew Hale, "will make you wise to eternal life, and furnish you with directions and principles to guide and order your life safely and prudently. There is no book like the Bible for excellent learning, wisdom, and use." The *perfection* of this light is shadowed forth by the Golden Candlestick, with its seven lamps. Seven is the number of mystical completeness; and the seven lamps set forth the full perfection of the Sacred Scriptures. (*a*)

III. The Ministers of the Church of God, and their Function.

Aaron and his sons, the priests, were to light the lamps in the Holy Place. It is the duty of ministers to expound and apply the teachings of the Word of God: not to use that Word to illustrate and confirm their own theories or the systems of other men; but reverently and earnestly to strive to ascertain its meaning and message, and to make that meaning and message clear and convincing to others. It is their sacred function to bring the light of the Divine Scriptures to bear upon the duties and experiences, the problems and perplexities, the sins and struggles of human life. It has been suggested that "the lighting of one lamp from another showed the opening of one text by another." This work of the Gospel ministry, if it is to be well done, demands careful and suitable education, diligent and devout study, and the gracious help of the Divine Spirit. (*b*)

It is also necessary that the Christian minister should live well. His life should be luminous as well as his ministry. It was well said by Thomas Adams: "He that preaches well in his pulpit, but lives disorderly out of it, is like a young scribbler: what he writes fair with his hand, his sleeve comes after and blots."

IV. The Function of the Church of God.

Like the Golden Candlestick, the

Church is to be a light-bearer. The Church is not the light, but it is the bearer of light, that which holds it forth and causes it widely to spread abroad its rays. It has no light of its own, but it diffuses that which it receives from its Saviour and Lord. Every Christian is "light in the Lord," and should show forth this light in the darkness of this world. He is called to this: "Ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life." "Ye are the light of the world," etc. (Matt. v. 14-16.) "I would not give much for your religion," says Mr. Spurgeon, "unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk; but they do shine. A lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no

gong; and yet far over the waters its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious." (c).

Application.

1. *To individuals*: Are our lives luminous in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ?

2. *To Churches*: Are we making good our claim to a place in "the Church of the living God" by taking our part in performing the Divine function of that Church? Are we diffusing the light of God in Christ in this dark world?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a). How large a space does a candle occupy? Just a little hole in the candlestick. But when it shines out to the poor traveller that has lost his way in the morass at midnight, how far it reaches! And to him how much it means, when it guides him to a highway, and to a hospitable place of residence! And how much it means on a rocky shore, when it gives light to a thousand ships with their imperilled mariners! It means safety. It does an important office-work, although it requires but a small space to stand in. And although the Word of God does not cover much ground, the ground that it does cover is so vital, and it stands so connected with man's life here and hereafter, that it shines with a clear light. And he that takes heed to it will certainly find the harbour, the shore, the haven. It is transcendently important; in present and temporal, and human respects, not so important as men have supposed; but in future, and eternal, and spiritual respects, a great deal more important than men have supposed.—*H. W. Beecher*.

Whatever else may be said about the Bible, I am sure no man can deny that it is the best book to guide men toward practical virtue and true holiness that has ever appeared in the world. Whatever may be the disputes about its origin, whatever may be the controversies and the doubts upon the various theories of inspiration, as a practical book, as a light to a man's feet, and a lamp to his path, it has proved itself to be, and can, by investigation, be shown to be the wisest book to follow that is known.—*Ibid*.

(b) Learning, as well as office, is requisite for a minister. An unlearned scribe, without his treasure of old and new, is unfit to interpret God's oracles. The priest's lips shall preserve knowledge, is no less a precept to the minister than a promise to the people;

we are unfit to be seers if we cannot distinguish between Hagar and Sarah. A minister without learning is a mere cypher, which fills up a place and increaseth the number, but signifies nothing. There have been some niggardly affected to learning, calling it man's wisdom. If the moral saying of a poet or a philosopher, or, perhaps, some golden sentence of a father, drop from us, it is straight called poisoned eloquence, as if all these were not the spoils of the Gentiles, and mere handmaids unto divinity. They wrong us: we make not the pulpit a philosophy, logic, poetry-school; but all these are so many stairs to the pulpit. Will you have it? The fox dispraiseth the grapes he cannot reach. If they could beat down learning, they might escape censure for their own ignorance. For shame! Let none that have born a book dispraise learning. She hath enemies enough abroad. She should be justified of her own children. Let Barbary disgrace arts, not Athens.—*Thomas Adams*.

(c) This world, with all its darkened societies, is but God's large house, in which so many of His children cry in the night, but never see or find their father; and as housewives do not kindle the household lamp at evening only to turn over it the big wheat measure to hide it or to quench it, but set it uncovered on its lamp-stand, that it may shed a cheerful gleam through all the room, so has our Heavenly House-Father, in mercy to His still darkened children, placed His saints on their conspicuous elevation of church-membership, that their clear light of Gospel knowledge and their reflected radiance of holy affections and Christlike deeds might spread abroad by open profession and unconcealed well-doing, a blessed illumination. It is not that the Christian need pant after notoriety, or vaingloriously flash his little spark where

he has no business. The House-Master who kindles us must place us, one on a loftier and one on a lower lamp-stand as it pleaseth Him. For us it is enough that we be content with the height or conspicuousness of our place, and cheerfully let such light as we have be seen as it may be, neither ambitiously envious nor timorously unfaithful. We are not free to descend from the stand on which He has put us, nor to hide our Christianity because we are looked at, any more than we are free to cease from shining because there are few to see us, or to flare the higher when many applaud. . . . As I have seen the glow-worm at late evening, by the silent side of an empty English lane, mount some tall spike of grass, and turn up its tiny lamp, content to hang head downwards, itself unseen, so that the exquisite soft green light which God had given it might be visible in its loveliness, so may one find in this world's lowly and unfrequented paths Christ's light-bearers, who shed each his own sweet love-light round a narrow circle of the dark, that the wayfarer who sees may praise, not his unsightly, and, sooth to say, concealed self, but that great Father in

heaven who lit this faint taper upon earth, even as He lit the nobler fires which burn far up in heaven. But just as I have shut the poor glow-worm in a box or under an inverted dish, yet found that it spent all its radiance there unseen, only for sake of love and because shine it must, so will the true soul, whom his Lord shall chance to imprison from shedding light on any human eye, rejoice no less to let his devout affections and gracious deeds be seen of Him who looks through the densest cover, and knows how to bestow an open reward.

Since, then, Jesus hath taught us that to be visible is no accident in Christian life, but the very condition of its usefulness, let us each with patient tendance trim our inward lamp, that in our hearts there may be the light of a sevenfold blessed grace; then let us not be ashamed with modest faithfulness to let that silent efficacious light of Christian character tell of us, that we have been shone upon by the face of Jesus; and of your Lord, that He is Light, and that in Him there is no darkness at all.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES; OR, ASPECTS OF ACCEPTABLE CONSECRATION TO GOD.

(Verses 5-22.)

Several of the homiletic suggestions arising out of these verses have already been noticed by us in our notes on the preceding chapters. Repetition of them is undesirable. They will be found on pp. 21-23; 48-53; 61-65. In this section of the history we have the account of the ordination of the Levites to the duties already assigned to them in chapters iii. and iv. They have been exchanged for the firstborn; and now they are consecrated to the work of their sacred calling. The order and ceremonies of their consecration were appointed by God; we shall regard that consecration as setting forth several aspects of acceptable consecration to God.

I. In acceptable consecration to God there is a practical recognition of the necessity of moral purity.

"Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them," etc. (verses 6 and 7). Human nature is defiled by sin. Its springs of thought and feeling are corrupt. Heart and hands are both stained by evil in

thought and deed. If we would approach unto God acceptably, we must seek spiritual cleansing. The offerings that are presented to God must be pure, and before man can offer himself to God, he must cleanse himself from sin (See Exod. iii. 5; Isa. i. 11-18; 1 Tim. ii. 8). Ministers of the Gospel are specially required to cultivate and exhibit moral purity in their life. They must translate the doctrine of their sermons into the practice of their life; they must be sound in doctrine and sincere in life. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." "A bishop must be blameless," etc. (1 Tim. iii. 2-7). "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works," etc. (Titus ii. 7, 8). "Being ensamples to the flock." Let all Christians, and all ministers especially, cultivate this moral purity. But how may it be attained?

1. *By personal effort.* "Let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean." The cleansing elements provided by God in the Gospel are of no

avail unless they are personally applied. "Wash you, make you clean," etc. The innumerable white-robed multitude, before the throne and before the Lamb, "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "Purifying their hearts by faith."

2. *By Divine influence.* Moses was commanded to cleanse the Levites: "And thus thou shalt do unto them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," &c. (1 John i. 7-9). God both provides the cleansing element and blesses man's cleansing efforts. "It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, and God's promise that He will cleanse us."

II. In acceptable consecration to God there is a practical recognition of the necessity of atonement for sin.

A young bullock was, by the Divine direction, offered to God as a sin-offering for the Levites (ver. 8, 12). In this, two truths of vital importance were symbolically expressed.

1. *That man needs forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God.* Man cannot truly serve God or commune with Him until these are attained by him.

2. *That forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God are to be attained through sacrifice.* Christ Jesus came into the world "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself Christ was offered to bear the sins of many." "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (See remarks on the sin-offering in our exposition of chaps. vi. 13-21, and vii. 10-88). (a)

III. Acceptable consecration to God must be unreserved and full.

"A young bullock with his meat-offering of fine flour mingled with oil" was to be offered to God for the Levites as a burnt-offering; which symbolically expressed the entire surrender of

the offerer unto God. As the offering was entirely consumed upon the altar to the honour of God, so the offerer gave himself wholly to God. (On this point see our exposition of chaps. vi. 13-21, and vii. 10-88). Notice two points:—

1. *God demands this entire consecration.* "The Levites are wholly given unto Me from among the children of Israel," etc., verses 16-18. (See pp. 50-53.)

2. *Gratitude urges to this entire consecration.* We have an intimation of this in this ceremony of consecration. The young bullock that was offered for a burnt-offering was to be presented to the Lord "with his meat-offering." This meat-offering of fine flour mingled with oil was an appendage to the devotion implied in the burnt-offering: it was eucharistic—a symbolical expression of man's gratitude for God's goodness. The Apostle besought the Roman Christians "by the mercies of God" to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, as their reasonable service. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving," etc. Let us through Jesus Christ offer ourselves wholly and for ever unto God. (b)

IV. Acceptable consecration to God must be open.

The Levites were consecrated to the service of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation. "Thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together" etc. (verses 9-12). "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," etc. (Rom. x. 9, 10.) "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Avoiding parade and ostentation on the one hand, and secrecy and undue reserve on the other, the true Christian both by word and deed

acknowledges Christ as his Saviour and Lord. See *Psa.* lvi. 15, 16; *Mark* v. 19, 20; *Matt.* v. 14-16. (c)

V. Acceptable consecration to God is followed by religious service.

"And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . And after that went the Levites in to do," etc. They were consecrated for this purpose, that they might "do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation." The consecration to God which is only a thing of profession and sentiment is worse than worthless; it is offensive in the sight of God, and baneful in its influence upon men. The true consecration is for service according to the will of God. In a special sense Christian ministers are the servants of God in the work of His Church; but every true Christian is also a servant of God. "We can serve God anywhere and everywhere, as well as in the pulpit or in the congregation. You may glorify God behind a counter just as in a cathedral; you may serve God sweeping a street as well as being a bishop." In respect to the service of the Levites two things are indicated:—

1. *In religious services there are different grades, and even the lowest grade is sacred and honourable.* "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons. . . . The Levites went in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron and before his sons." See pp. 48-50.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The Lord did not study attractive aesthetics. He did not prepare a tabernacle that should delight men's tastes; it was rich indeed, but so blood-stained as to be by no means beautiful. No staining of glass to charm the eye, but instead thereof the inwards of slaughtered bullocks. Such sights would disgust the delicate tastes of the fops of this present age. Blood, blood on every side; death, fire, smoke, and ashes, varied with the bellowings of dying beasts, and the active exertions of men whose white garments were all crimson with the blood of victims. How clearly did the worshippers see the sternness and severity of the justice of God against

2. *The faithful performance of religious services is of the greatest importance to society.* "I have given the Levites to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary." (See explanatory notes on ver. 19. and pp. 22, 23).

But the true and acceptable Christian consecration extends to all our life and work: he who is truly devoted to God will do all things as for Him. (d)

"If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

As for some dear familiar strain
Untir'd we ask, and ask again,
Ever, in its melodious store,
Finding a spell unheard before;

Such is the bliss of souls serene,
When they have sworn, and steadfast mean,
Counting the cost in all t' espy
Their God, in all themselves deny.

O could we learn that sacrifice,
What lights would all around us rise!
How would our hearts with wisdom talk
Along Life's dullest, dreariest walk!

We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky:

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask:
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God."—*Keble*.

human sin, and the intensity of the agony of the great Son of God who was in the fulness of time by His own death to put away all the sins and transgressions of His people! By faith come ye, my brethren, and walk round that blood-stained altar, and as you mark its four-square form and its horns of strength, and see the sacrifices smoking thereon acceptable to God, look down and mark the blood with which its foundations are so completely saturated, and understand how all salvation and all acceptance rests on the atonement of the dying Son of God.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(b) If you could now regrets in the realm of blessedness, would not these be the regrets,

that you have not served Christ better, loved Him more, spoke of Him oftener, given more generously to His cause, and more uniformly proved yourselves to be consecrated to Him? I am afraid that such would be the form of the regrets of Paradise, if any could intrude within those gates of pearl. Come, let us live while we live! Let us live up to the utmost stretch of our manhood! Let us ask the Lord to brace our nerves, to string our sinews, and make us true crusaders, knights of the blood-red cross, consecrated men and women, who, for the love we bear Christ's name, will count labour to be ease, and suffering to be joy, and reproach to be honour, and loss to be gain! If we have never yet given ourselves wholly up to Christ as His disciples, now hard by His cross, where we see His wounds still bleeding afresh, and Himself quivering in pain for us, let us pledge ourselves in His strength, that we give ourselves wholly to Him without reserve, and so may He help us by His Spirit, that the vow may be redeemed and the resolve may be carried out, that we may live to Christ, and dying may find it gain.—*Ibid.*

(c) It is in all cases the instinct of a new heart, in its experience of God, to acknowledge Him. No one ever thinks it a matter of delicacy or genuine modesty entirely to suppress any reasonable joy, least of all any fit testimony of gratitude toward a deliverer and for a deliverance. In such a case no one ever asks, what is the use? where is the propriety? for it is the simple instinct of his nature to speak, and he speaks. Thus, if one of you had been rescued in a shipwreck on a foreign shore, by some common sailor who had risked his life to save you, and you should discover him across the street in some great city, you would rush to his side, seize his hand, and begin at once, with a choking utterance, to testify your gratitude to him for so great a deliverance. Or, if you should pass restrainedly on, making no sign, pretending to yourself that you might be wanting in delicacy or modesty to publish your private feelings by any such eager acknowledgment of your deliverer, or that you ought first to be more sure of the genuineness of your gratitude, what opinion must we have in such a case of your heartlessness and falseness to nature! In the same simple way, all ambition apart, all conceit of self forgot, all artificial and mock modesty excluded, it will be the instinct of every one that loves God to acknowledge Him. He will say with our Psalmist, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul,"—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

(d) Holiness is the attribute of persons, places, times, or things, set apart by the will of God from common uses, and devoted to Himself. But by God's own appointment, those who were thus consecrated to His service in Jewish times spent a great part of their life in work which *in itself* was of quite a secular character. The Levites, for

instance, were not always praying, or preaching, or reading the scriptures, or offering sacrifices. When the nation was in the desert, the Levites had to take down the Tabernacle and set it up, and to carry the furniture from one camping-ground to another, just as the rest of the people had to take down their own tents and set them up again, and to carry their own goods from place to place. The work of the Levites was as hard as the work of the common people; but the work of the Levites was holy, because the Tabernacle was the Tent of God. They swept the courts of the Tabernacle, and when the Temple was built they swept the larger courts of the Temple; they kindled fires; they made incense; they stored wine and oil; they drew water; they killed animals; they learnt to play musical instruments; but there was nothing profane in their most menial occupations, for whatever they did, they did as God's servants. They had charge of large revenues; but the revenues consisted of what the people offered to God. They acted as magistrates and administered the law; but the law which they administered was Divine. Even the priests had to change the shew-bread, to burn incense, and to tend fires.

A great part of the work that was done by Priests and Levites was *in itself* mere secular work; but they and their work were "holy," because they were set apart to God's service, and because their work was done for God, and in obedience to God's commandments. A great part of the work that must be done by Christian people in our times is *in itself* mere secular work. It has to be done at the carpenter's bench, at the blacksmith's anvil, in the kitchen, behind a draper's counter, at the desk in a merchant's office, on the box of an omnibus, on the platform of a locomotive, in the van of a railway guard, in cotton mills, in bank parlours, in the private rooms of newspaper editors, in political committees, at School Boards, in Government offices, in Parliament;—and if there is hearty, unreserved consecration to God, if God's will is the law by which all the work is controlled, if God's honour is the end to which all the work is devoted, the "secular" work, however earnestly it is done, is no more inconsistent with saintliness than were the menial duties of Priests with their "consecration" to the duties of their priesthood. The Priests would have been unfaithful to the solemnities with which they were set apart to their holy office if, in the conceit and fastidiousness of priestly pride, they had neglected their menial duties under the pretence of maintaining their sanctity. Christian men are equally unfaithful to their nobler calling if, under the influence of a similar conceit and fastidiousness, they regard what they call secular work as "common and unclean," and refuse to discharge obvious duties under the pretence of keeping their holiness untainted.

But holiness is something more than a fault-

less morality. The difference between a holy man and a moral man is the difference between a Temple or a Church and a house. You may erect a very noble building; the design may be stately; the proportions magnificent; there may be plenty of space, and air, and light; the walls may be of pure white marble like the walls of Italian palaces; the decorations may be perfectly beautiful; but if you build it for yourself it is a House, and not a Temple. It was not the splendour of the building on Mount Moriah that made it a Temple, but the Divine uses to which by Divine appointment it was consecrated. Nor does Holiness consist in fidelity to certain ecclesiastical traditions. You may build a House in the style of a Church; there may be nave and transepts and chancel; there may be

clustered columns, and the windows may be glorious with crimson and purple and gold; but if the building is for yourself and for your private uses, it is no Church, but a mere House. And, on the other hand, no matter how poor and mean our life may look to common eyes, it is sacred—every part is sacred—if we have consecrated ourselves to God. The tent which was God's Tabernacle in the wilderness was more awful and august than the palaces of kings. Everything depends on the law which we are trying to obey, and the Master whom we are trying to serve. Holiness is the result of the consecration of our whole life to God. It requires that we should make God's will our supreme law, and that we should do God's will for God's glory.—*R. W. Dale, M.A., D.D.*

THE DIVINE MASTER AND HIS HUMAN SERVANTS.

(Verses 23-26).

We have here the Divine directions as to the period of the Service of the Levites. The manner in which these directions are introduced—"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying;" the words which immediately follow these directions—"Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge;" and their position in the history, immediately after the ordination of the Levites to their sacred duties, show that they are intended to be the fixed law for the service of the Levites at the sanctuary. In chap. iv. ver. 3, Moses was commanded to number the Levites "from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation," while in the text the period of service is fixed from twenty-five years old and upward until fifty years old. That numbering had reference especially to the carriage of the tabernacle from place to place during the wanderings in the wilderness, a laborious service requiring the strength of mature manhood; whereas the directions of the text refer to the entire service of the tabernacle, which, when it was stationary, could be performed without difficulty by persons of twenty-five years of age. At a subsequent period the age at which the Levites began their service was fixed at twenty years, because the tabernacle being

permanently placed upon Mount Zion, they were no longer required to "carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof" (1 Chron. xiii. 24-32).

The text suggests the following Homiletic points:—

I. The necessity of fitness for the Divine service.

Though the Levites entered upon their service at the age of twenty-five years, they took no part in its heaviest duties until they had attained thirty years, and thorough physical fitness; and when at fifty years that fitness began to fail, they were released from the severe duties, and employed only in such as would not try their physical powers. God requires fit instruments for His work. He can use any instrumentality whatsoever, or He can accomplish His purpose without any instrumentality; but His rule is to use those instruments who are best adapted for the accomplishment of His purposes. The arrangement of the service of the Levites shows this. The calling and career of such men as Joseph, Moses, David, John the Baptist, Paul, show this. In learning any handicraft or trade, years are spent under instructors: for the practice of law or medicine men must have special and careful training: and is it not important that they who engage in religious services should be

qualified for such services? Let all religious workers do their utmost to prepare themselves for their important and sacred duties: let them study, pray, &c. (a)

Let Christian ministers especially be conscientious and painstaking in this respect. (b)

II. The variety of employment in the Divine service.

In their life in the wilderness there was Levitical service suited to young men of twenty-five years of age, there was severe labour for men from thirty to fifty years of age, and there was honourable and easy service for those who were fifty years old and upward. (See explanatory notes on these verses). The aged Levites had the oversight of the furniture of the tabernacle, and were probably engaged in instructing the young men, and in guarding the tabernacle against the approach of any prohibited persons. In the service of God to-day there is room for workers of every kind and degree of faculty; there is ample scope for the enthusiasm of youth, the strength of manhood, and the ripe experience of age. The able reasoner, the eloquent orator, the skilful manager of affairs, the patient plodding worker, the sympathetic visitor of the sick and sorrowful, the gifted and loving teacher, the prevailing intercessor at the Throne of Grace, the unobtrusive and kindly tract distributor, even the worn and weary sufferer, calm, and sweetly submissive to the Divine will, each and all have their sphere and their mission in the service of God. In this we have—

1. *An encouragement to persons of feeble powers and narrow opportunities to try to do good.* (c)

2. *A rebuke to those who plead inability as an excuse for their indolence in religious service.* Use the ability you

have, however small it may be; and by so doing you will increase it. God holds us responsible only for the ability we have or may have, not for that we have not and cannot obtain. (See pp. 40, 41).

III. The care of the Great Master for His servants.

He will not have His servants overburdened; His youthful servants He will not prematurely call to posts of severe labour or solemn responsibility, and for those who "have borne the burden and heat of the day" He arranges an eventide of honourable and restful service. He calls men to work for which they are adapted; and if in their work any severe strain be imposed upon them, He giveth unto them more grace. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He graciously sustains every worker in his toil, gives to every worker sweetest joy in his toil, and will gloriously reward even the smallest service of the feeblest worker. (d)

"How blessed from the bonds of sin,
And earthly fetters free,
In singleness of heart and aim,
Thy servant, Lord, to be!
The hardest toil to undertake
With joy at Thy command,
The meanest office to receive
With meekness at Thy hand!"

How happily the working days
In this dear service fly,
How rapidly the closing hour,
The time of rest draws nigh!
When all the faithful gather home,
A joyful company,
And ever where the Master is,
Shall His blest servants be."—*Spitta*.

Conclusion.

This subject supplies—

1. *Encouragement to enter into this service.* "Come thou with us," etc.

2. *Encouragement to persevere in this service.* A glorious reward awaits those who patiently continue in well doing.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You have read in history of that hero who, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his followers were urging him to more rapid flight, coolly dismounted to repair a flaw in his horse's harness. While busied with the broken buckle, the

distant crowd swept down in nearer thunder; but, just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were ready to dash upon him, the flaw was mended, and, like a swooping falcon, he had vanished from their view. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a dis-

mounted and inglorious prisoner; the timely delay sent him in safety back to his comrades. There is in daily life the same luckless precipitancy, and the same profitable delay. The man who, from his prayerless awakening, bounces into the business of the day, however good his talents and great his diligence, is only galloping upon a steed harnessed with a broken buckle, and must not marvel if, in his hottest haste or most hazardous leap, he be left ingloriously in the dust; and though it may occasion some little delay beforehand, his neighbour is wiser who sets out all in order before the march begins.—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

(b) I believe that at bottom most people think it an uncommonly easy thing to preach, and that they could do it amazingly well themselves. Every donkey thinks itself worthy to stand with the king's horses; every girl thinks that she could keep house better than her mother; but thoughts are not facts, for the sprat thought itself a herring, but the fisherman knew better. I daresay those who can whistle fancy that they can plough; but there's more than whistling in a good ploughman; and so let me tell you there's more in good preaching than taking a text, and saying firstly, secondly, and thirdly. I try my hand at preaching myself, and in my poor way I find it no very easy thing to give the folks something worth hearing; and if the fine critics, who reckon us up on their thumbs, would but try their own hands at it, they might be a little more quiet. Dogs, however, always will bark, and what is worse, some of them will bite, too; but let decent people do all they can, if not to muzzle them, yet to prevent their doing any great mischief.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) In order to serve Christ acceptably, we have not to revolutionize our lot, nor to seek other conditions than those Providence supplies. The place is nothing; the heart is all. Chambers of patient invalids, beds of submissive sickness, obscurity, weakness, baffled plans,—a thousand nameless limitations of faculty, of opportunity, of property,—all these are witnesses of silent but victorious faith. In all of them God is glorified, for in all of them His will is done. Out of all of them gates open into heaven and the joy of the Lord. Mercifully the Father has appointed many ways in which we may walk toward His face, and run on His errands. Work is the way for strength; lying still is the way for infirmity. If only there are trust and prayer in both, there is some instruction in a picture

I have read of, which represents the lives of twin brothers diverging from the cradle. One, by study, becomes a learned and skilful physician, reaching great riches and honour by administering to the sick. The other has no talent for books, and no memory, and no science; he becomes a poor strolling musician, but spends his days in consoling, by his lute, sufferings that are beyond all medicine. The brothers are shown meeting at the close of their career. The vagrant is sick and worn out, and the brother prescribes for him out of his learning, and gathers ingenious compounds for his relief; but, meantime, he to whom God gave another gift touches his instrument for the solace of the great man's shattered nerves, and heals his benefactor's disordered spirit.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

Out of this whole structure of the human body, every little muscle, every single cell, has its own secretion and its own work; and though some physicians have said this and that organ might be spared, I believe there is not a single thread in the whole embroidery of human nature that could be well spared—the whole of the fabric is required. So in the mystical body, the Church, the least member is necessary; the most uncomely member of the Christian Church is needful for its growth. Find out, then, what your sphere is, and occupy it. Ask God to tell you what is your niche, and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall come and give you your reward. Use what ability you have, and use it at once.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) I know your gifts to His Church, and His poor, are necessarily but little, for yours is the poor widow's portion perhaps, and you can give only your two mites; but I know that, as they fall into the treasury, Jesus sits over against the treasury and hears sweet sounds in the dropping of your gifts. I know your life is such that you mourn over it every day, but still you do serve God in it, and you long to serve Him more, and that love of yours is written in the books of the King's record, and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels; and your works shall be His too, for your works shall follow you to the skies when you rise in Jesus, and your reward even for a cup of cold water shall be as sure as it will be gracious, and your entrance into the joy of your Lord shall certainly be bestowed upon you according to the grace which is in Christ Jesus, by which he has accepted you.—*Ibid.*

SERVICE.

(Verse 24.)

The Levitical service in the wilderness was very severe ; it required strong, able-bodied men. There were, in addition to the ministrations in the tabernacle, many heavy weights to carry. (It is computed by some that the metal of the tabernacle alone weighed 10 tons, 13 cwts., 24 lbs., 14 ozs., beside skins, hangings, cords, boards, and posts). In David's time we read they began at twenty years of age ; but in the wilderness they did not fully engage in the more laborious service until thirty, although the time for their assisting was fixed at twenty-five.

I. The service God demands of all Levites.

Every Christian should be a priest, ever ministering in His temple.

1. *Burden-bearing.* How often Christians murmur about their burdens, as though they were not honoured in being permitted to bear anything for God.

2. *Singing.* The Levites sang and

played on instruments. Sing the song of gratitude and contentment.

3. *Studying of the law.* "Search the Scriptures."

4. *Attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary.* There is a special blessing for those who worship in God's house.

II. God demands the service in our prime.

"From twenty and five." We must give God the best we have. The lamb must be without blemish ; the fruit the first and choicest, to show our love and gratitude.

III. God demands this service when it can be most easily rendered.

God did not ask of the Levites, nor does He of us, impossibilities. The very young and the old were exempt from the bearing of the heavier burdens. God suits the burden to the back. All he asks is that we shall do what we can.—*R. A. Griffin.*

CHAPTER IX.

Critical and explanatory notes.

Verses 1-5. This Passover, having been kept in the first month of the second year, preceded the numbering and the other events recorded in this book. For this reason some writers have said that verses 1-14 should be transposed to an earlier portion of the narrative. But the observance of the supplementary Passover (verses 6-14) was one of the last events before the departure from Sinai ; and the ordinance of it is very properly placed here ; and the account of the observance of the ordinary Passover which gave rise to it is not unnaturally placed before it.

From Exod. xii. 24, 25, the Israelites might have concluded that they

were not to keep the Passover until they came to Canaan ; but, inasmuch as the Anniversary of the Feast occurred while they were still in the desert of Sinai, a special command is given to them to keep it. And had it not been for the subsequent unbelief and rebellion of the people, before the anniversary returned again they would have been possessors of the land promised unto them.

Verse 3. *According to all the rights of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof.* See Exod. xii. 3-28, 43-51, xiii. 3-11.

Verse 6. *There were certain men, etc.* "Probably Mishael and Elizaphan, who buried their cousins, Nadab and Abihu,

within a week of this Passover (Lev. x. 4, 5). None would be more likely to make this inquiry of Moses than his kinsmen, who had defiled themselves by his express direction."—*Speaker's Commentary*.

Verse 15. *The tent of the testimony*, or, *witness*, denotes the whole of the tabernacle, comprising the holy of holies and the holy place, and not merely the holy of holies. The phrase seems to indicate the same portion of the structure as *ohel mo'ed*, "tent of meeting."

Verse 20. *And so it was, when*, etc. Rather, "And there was also when," etc.

Verse 21. *And so it was, when*, etc. Rather, "And there was also when the cloud abode from even unto morning, and the cloud was taken up in the morning, and they journeyed."

Verse 22. *A year*. Heb., "days," i.e., a space of time not precisely determined.

As long as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle, whether it was for one day, a few days, or many days, they continued their encampment; and when it arose from the tabernacle they broke up their encampment and resumed their march. The movements of the cloud were to them the commands of the Lord God. For the numerous Homiletic suggestions connected with the institution and observation of the Passover we must refer the reader to *The Homiletical Commentary* on Exod. xii. and xiii. where the directions for keeping the ordinance are given in detail. To attempt anything like an exhaustive treatment of the ordinance would be out of place here.

THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER, A MEMORIAL AND A TYPE.

(Verses 1-5.)

The Passover, the celebration of which is here commanded by God, was—

I. A Memorial of a great Deliverance.

1. *Deliverance from the most terrible evils*. (1) From a miserable slavery. The Israelites in Egypt were held in most degrading and cruel bondage. (2) From a terrible visitation of Divine judgment. When the firstborn of the Egyptians, both of man and of beast, were all destroyed, the firstborn of the Israelites were exempted from the destruction. Primarily and essentially the Passover was a memorial of this great historical fact. Exod. xii. 26, 27. (a)

2. *Deliverance from the most terrible evils associated with the sacrifice of life*. A lamb of the first year, without blemish, and a male, was to be slain for every family (unless the family were too small to consume the lamb, in which case they were to unite with their nearest neighbour in the matter), and the blood sprinkled upon the posts

of the door, and the flesh entirely eaten after having been roasted with fire. Such were the explicit commands of God by His servants Moses and Aaron. Exod. xii. 3-10.

3. *Deliverance from the most terrible evils through the sovereign grace of God*. Their exemption from the stroke of the destroying angel, and their emancipation from their bitter slavery in Egypt, were due to the sovereign favour of the Lord God. The gracious purpose and the grand performance were alike owing to Him. "Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph."

4. *Deliverance from terrible evils by means of faith and obedience*. The sprinkling of the blood upon the doorposts was an act of faith and obedience, which God required as a condition of their exemption from the stroke of the destroying angel, and which, when performed, He graciously accepted. However ill-adapted the means might have seemed to the end, they employed them as they were directed,

and so secured their safety (Heb. xi. 28).

So great and marvellous a deliverance demanded a fitting memorial.

II. A type of a greater deliverance.

This portion of the history of Israel typifies—

1. *The morally enslaved and perilous state of man.* Sinful men are in a far more terrible state of bondage than that of Israel in Egypt. Their slavery was *physical*; that of the sinner is *spiritual*. His soul is the slave of animal appetites, and turbulent passions, and evil habits. Their slavery was a *calamity*; that of the sinner is a *crime*. The Lord God pitied them because of their bondage; He condemns man because of his. To be the slaves of sin is to be guilty of grievous moral wrong in the sight of God. Their slavery, at the farthest, would *end at death*; but *death has no power to terminate the slavery of the sinner*. The death of the body cannot free the soul from the bondage of evil passions or tyrannical habits. The peril also of the sinner is greater than was that of the ancient Israelites. They were delivered from the stroke of the destroying angel. But the destruction of physical life is a small evil as compared with the destruction of all that constitutes the life of the soul. In many cases the death of the body is the great gain of the man. But what tongue or pen can describe the awfulness and the painfulness of the destruction by sin of the moral purity, the power, the reverence, the aspiration, the hope, the peace of the soul? Such is the destruction of which the sinner is in danger.

2. *The Divine method of deliverance.* The Lamb of the Passover exhibits the closest type of the atoning Sacrifice who died for us and has made our peace with God. Our Lord is spoken of in the Bible as a lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. The Passover lamb was to be "without blemish." St. Peter speaks of Jesus Christ as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The Passover

lamb was to be slain, and its blood upon the door-posts was the sign by which the houses of the Israelites were distinguished, and so exempted from the power of the destroyer. Jesus Christ was crucified for us. By His death we have life. "We have redemption through His blood." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." God delivers us from sin through the self-sacrifice of Christ for us. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men where-
by we must be saved." (b)

3. *The Divine Author of deliverance.* The Lord God spared the first-born of Israel when the first-born of Egypt were destroyed. He also delivered them from their cruel bondage in Egypt. He only can emancipate the soul from the thralldom of sin, and deliver it from that death which is the wages of sin. He originated the method of deliverance; and His is the power by which the deliverance is accomplished. Neither of these things could man have done. Education, science, philosophy, means and efforts of social reform and amelioration, may do much for man; but they cannot free him from the dominion of sin, or deliver him from spiritual death—they cannot save him. God alone can do this; and He is "mighty to save," "He is able to save them to the uttermost," etc.

4. *The human appropriation of deliverance.* The Israelites were to "strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood" of the slain lamb as a condition of their deliverance. If they would be saved from the visit of the destroyer, they must believe the word of the Lord by Moses and obey it. If the death of Jesus Christ is to be of any real benefit to us personally, we must personally believe in Him as our Saviour. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (c)

Conclusion :

Sentence of death has gone forth against all sinners. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." God in Christ is the only

One who can deliver from this death. Faith in Him is the only condition by which we can avail ourselves of His deliverance. Believe in Him, at once and fully, and life eternal is yours.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Such a night as never darkened from heaven before or since in Egypt, now descends upon her in the mysterious providence of God. It is "a night much to be remembered." The children of Israel are all up and ready for departure, their loins girt, and their lamps burning, the Paschal lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs with which it was to be eaten, in their hands and mouths; the blood from the basins sprinkled on the lintel and the two door-posts, and all awaiting the moment when the shriek of the victims of the angel of death shall act as the blast of God's trumpet to tell them to depart! Such a feast! without one song of gladness or word of converse; ate in absolute silence and in a standing posture, and with every ear erect to listen to the sounds of wrath and woe which are expected. Do they hear the wings of the destroying angel without their dwellings, first sweeping near, then pausing (what a moment of suspense, for may not some have forgotten to stamp the stain upon the door, or stamped it too feebly?), and then hurrying onward? And do not, by-and-bye, faintly-heard and distant shrieks arise, swelling soon into one desperate and universal "cry," proclaiming that there is "not an house where there is not one dead"? It is at midnight that this fell-stroke lights on guilty Egypt, and the darkness contributes to the confusion, the horror, and the despair. "All the first-born are smitten, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on the throne to the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon." In one house, a child has been newly born to those who had been long married without the usual fruits of wedlock, and the parents are, perhaps, with a fond and foolish joy, exulting over the recent birth, when a sharp short cry from the cradle tells them their child is dead. In another, all the family have been cut off previously, except their firstborn, a boy who has become more the delight of their parents that he is their little all, as if he had absorbed the interest and life of the rest, but he, too, on his small couch is smitten, and their hope and joy die with him. In a third house, the first-born is a fair female, and to-morrow is her wedding day, but death anticipates the bridegroom, and claps his cold ring upon her shrinking finger. In a fourth, a heroic youth who had projected a journey to the lands of Ethiopia and the sources of the Nile, and is dreaming that he has set out on his way, awakes for a moment to feel the death-pang summoning him to a farther and more adven-

turous exploration. In another house, one lies down who is on the morrow to be initiated into the higher mysteries of priesthood, but death says to him, "Understand this my mystery first, deeper infinitely than they." In another, the firstborn son is to rise next day to bury his father, but long ere morning he is laid cold by his side. How impartial this terrible angel! Here one firstborn has been condemned to die a public and a shameful death on the approaching day; but at midnight there is a corpse in the prison cell, and the law is disappointed of its prey. And there another, it is Pharaoh's own eldest son, whose birthday, he is come of age, is to be celebrated to-morrow, expires at the very moment of midnight, and his father rises and begins that wild wail which is echoed by every homestead in the land of Ham—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) Here is the firstborn, the unblemished beauty, the chaste Lamb of God; never came to mortal eyes any such perfect one before. And the expense He makes, under His great love-struggle and heavy burden of feeling, His Gethsemane, where the burden presses Him down into agony; His Calvary, where, in His unprotesting and lamb-like submission, He allows Himself to be immolated by the world's wrath; what will any one, seeing all this, so naturally or inevitably call it, as His sacrifice for the sins of the world? His blood, too, the blood of the incarnate Son of God, blood of the upper world half as truly as of this—when it touches and stains the defiled earth of the planet, what so sacred blood on the horns of the altar and the lid of the mercy-seat did any devoutest worshipper at the altar ever see sprinkled for his cleansing? There his sin he hoped could be dissolved away, and it comforted his conscience that, by the offering of something sacred as blood, he could fitly own his defilement, and by such tender argument win the needed cleansing. But the blood of Christ, He that was born of the Holy Ghost, He that was Immanuel—when this sprinkles Calvary, it is to him as if some touch of cleansing were in it for the matter itself of the world! In short, there is so much in this analogy, and it is so affecting, so profoundly real, that no worshipper most devout before the altar having once seen Christ, who He is, what He has done by His cross, and the glorious offering He has made of Himself in His ministry of good, faithful unto death—who will not turn away instinctively to Him, saying, "No more altars, goats,

or lambs; these were shadows I see; now has come the substance. This is my sacrifice, and here is my peace—the blood that was shed for the remission of sins—this I take and want no other.”—*H. Bushnell. D.D.*

(c) Let me suppose that you profoundly long to know what you must do, on what you must lay hold, in order that you may appropriate to yourself the benefits of Christ's death, that you may be saved by His sacrifice, that you may be reconciled to God by His atonement. You come to me and ask, “What must I do? do first? How am I to set about this great quest and task?”

With much sympathy, as of one who has himself had to solve your problem as best he could, I reply, Fix your thoughts first and chiefly on the fact on which both St. Paul and St. John lay such extraordinary emphasis, viz., that the death, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice of Christ—take which term you will—is a manifestation of the eternal and inexhaustible love of God for sinful men, for all sinful men; a manifestation of the resolve and intention of that Love to take away the sin of the whole world, and to redeem you personally from all your iniquities. You see at once how great, how voluntary, how unmerited, how intense and Divine that Love is. It shrinks from nothing—from no effort, from no sacrifice, from no pang whether of body or of spirit, from no contact with evil, from no experience whether of the ingratitude and insolent wickedness of man or of the pain of self-limitation to any form of life or of death. So much you cannot fail to see with the story of the Gospel in your hand. And *your first duty* is to believe in that almost incredible Love, a

Love that would be absolutely incredible but for its manifestation and proof in the history of Jesus Christ the Lord. You are to trust in that Love, to be sure that a love which extends to all the world *must* extend to you. You are to commit yourself to it—your soul as well as your body; commit yourself to it in life, in death, after death; and to sincerely believe that all must go well with you because that Love is over you and upon you. *This* is what you are to do and believe. It is *this* on which specifically you are to lay hold. It is *thus* that you are to appropriate the benefits of Christ's death.

And, then, if you take this first step, what will be your second? What will be the inevitable result and consequence of having taken the first? Obviously, if you do sincerely and heartily believe in such a Love as that, your own love will spring up and run out to meet it. You will love Him who first loved you. And your love will be, or will come to be as God's love takes effect upon you, of the same quality with His—an unselfish love, a love capable of living and dying for others, a love pure and righteous, strong and enduring; a love that will gradually transform you into His likeness, and make you of one will with Him . . . You are to lay hold of the Cross of Christ as at once a manifestation of God's righteous anger against the sins with which you, too, are angry, and from which you seek to be delivered, and a revelation of the Love which is bent on conquering sin and redeeming you from all evil. You are to so appreciate and trust that Love as that it shall quicken a corresponding affection, and make it the ruling affection, in your own soul.—*Samuel Cox.*

ORDINANCE OF THE PASSOVER.

(Verses 1-5.)

The design of God in instituting this remarkable ordinance, the Passover, was to explain to us, as well as to prefigure to the Jews, the method of salvation through the blood of Christ. He is the One great Sacrifice for sin; and here, the application to Him in His mediatorial work is most comprehensive. Behold the analogy. It holds—

I. With regard to the victim which was chosen.

Was it a lamb? Christ is often so called on account of His innocence, meekness, and resignation (Isa. liii. 7; John i. 29; 1 Peter i. 19; Rev. v. 6.) Was it chosen from the flock? Christ was taken from among His brethren (Acts iii. 22). Was it a male of the

first year? Christ suffered in the prime of His days. Was it without blemish? Christ was altogether perfect (Heb. vii. 26; 1 Peter i. 19).

II. With regard to the oblation which was made.

As the lamb was slain, so was Jesus (Rev. v. 9). As the lamb was slain before the whole assembly (Exod. xii. 6), so Jesus was publicly put to death. As the lamb was slain between the two evenings, so Jesus was offered between three o'clock and six (Matt. xxvii. 45). As the lamb was set apart four days before it was slain (Exod. xii. 3, 6), so Christ entered the city four days before His crucifixion (Matt. xxi. 1 sqq).

III. With regard to the blood which was sprinkled.

The blood was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop (Exod. xii. 22, dipt into the bason; so the blood of Christ is the blood of the everlasting covenant, the deposit of privileges, which all become ours by the exercise of faith. The blood was sprinkled upon the door-posts of their dwellings. So the blood of Christ is to be applied to the hearts and consciences of believers (Heb. ix. 13, 14; x. 22). The blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and the side posts; but not behind nor below the door. So the blood of Christ is not to be trodden under foot (Heb. x. 29). The blood secured every family where it was sprinkled, it being within the limits of the Divine protection, so that the destroying angel was forbidden to hurt them. So the blood of Jesus is the only refuge for the guilty.

IV. With regard to the flesh which was eaten.

The flesh of the lamb was eaten roasted with fire, strikingly exhibiting the severity of our Saviour's sufferings. (Isa. l. 6; lii. 14, 15; Psa. xxii. 14, 15.)

It was eaten whole, and not a bone broken, which was amazingly fulfilled in reference to Christ. (John xix. 31-36.) It was eaten in haste, with the staff in their hands, to intimate that Christ is to be received immediately without delay. It was eaten with bitter herbs, importing our looking to Christ with sorrow of heart, in remembrance of sin, as expressed in Zech. xii. 10. It was eaten with the loins girded, implying that we must be prepared for His coming. (Eph. vi. 14.) It was eaten with the feet shod, to remind us of the freedom and happiness which Christ imparts to the believing Israelites. (compare Isa. xx. 2-4 with Rom. v. 11.) It was eaten with unleavened bread, because we are to receive and profess Christ with unfeigned sincerity. (1 Cor. v. 7, 8; John i. 47.)

Upon the whole, we learn from the subject the happy state of believers, who, though once afar off, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ; and likewise the unhappy state of unbelievers, who, rejecting the atonement, must inevitably perish. — *William Sleight.*

UNWILLING EXCLUSION FROM RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES.

(Verses 6-12, 14.)

In these verses we have the following homiletic points, which we may profitably consider:—

I. The Divine recognition of the need of personal fitness for an acceptable observance of religious ordinances.

A person who was ceremonially unclean was prohibited from taking part in the Passover; for only those who were clean could participate in any sacrificial meal, or offer any sacrifice. (Lev. vii. 20, 21.) So "there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man who could not keep the Passover on that day." A certain moral fitness is essential to an acceptable approach unto God. Our Lord taught that a man cannot present an acceptable offering to God who is

not in right relations with his fellow-men. (Matt. v. 23, 24.) And St. Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to examine themselves before partaking of the Supper of the Lord. (1 Cor. xi. 28.) Two things at least appear to us as indispensable to an acceptable approach to God in public religious ordinances:

1. *Faith in the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.* (John xiv. 6.; Rom. v. 1, 2; Eph. ii. 18; Heb. iv. 15, 16; x. 19-22.)

2. *Devout preparation of the heart.* There are many persons who derive no benefit from the public means of grace because they enter upon them with minds engrossed by worldly engagements or anxieties, or with thoughtless, frivolous minds, &c. Such mental

states preclude communion with God. (a)

II. The unwilling exclusion of men from religious ordinances.

Here are certain men who were excluded from keeping the Passover through no fault of their own. Their defilement was not moral, but ceremonial; and this was contracted not of their own free choice, but of inevitable necessity; not by association with the morally depraved, but by the needful work of the burial of the dead; yet they were prohibited from observing the Passover. There are many to-day who are unwillingly deprived from taking part in public religious ordinances,—some by reason of severe bodily afflictions; others by the pressure of the infirmities of age; others by their ministry to the afflicted; and others by legitimate domestic duties, *e.g.*, the care of infants and little children, &c. Every Lord's day there are very many persons who would esteem it a privilege and joy to unite in the engagements of public worship, but they cannot do so. Let us learn to prize the opportunities of doing so while we have them.

III. A commendable enquiry concerning the reason of such exclusion from religious ordinances.

The men who were so excluded "came before Moses and before Aaron on that day;" &c. Their enquiry was commendable—

1. *As regards its spirit.* It implied (1) *Faith in the reasonableness of the Divine requirements.* "Wherefore are we kept back?" &c. It is as though they had said, "There must be a reason for this prohibition; may we know that reason? can you explain it to us? or can you meet in some way what seems to us the hardship of our case?" All the Divine arrangements are in the highest degree reasonable; they are expressions of infinite wisdom. (2) *Affection for Divine ordinances.* The deprivation was painful to them. It is a grief to the godly soul to be deprived of the public means of grace. "Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." "How amiable

Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth," &c. There is good ground for this affection. In Divine ordinances God manifests Himself graciously to His people (Exod. xx. 24; Matt. xviii. 19, 20), and makes unto them rich communications of grace and truth.

2. *As regards its direction.* "They came before Moses and before Aaron," and enquired of them. The leader and lawgiver, and the high priest, both of whom were appointed by God, were the proper persons to consult on the difficulty which had arisen. Let those who are religiously perplexed seek help from those who by reason of their character and attainments are qualified to render the same.

The solicitude of these men for participation in this religious ordinance is a rebuke to many who, in our own day, disregard the public worship of God and the ministry and the sacraments of the Gospel.

IV. The exemplary conduct of religious teachers in answering the enquiries of their charge.

"And Moses said unto them, Stand still," &c. In the conduct of Moses we see,—

1. *Exemplary humility.* He tacitly admits his inability to answer their enquiry of himself. It is only ignorance and conceit that assumes the airs of infallibility. The minister of spiritual intelligence and power is ever humble. (b)

2. *Exemplary enquiry.* "I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you," said Moses. That he might answer these enquiries, he himself enquires of the Lord. So should the Christian minister in instructing others. We have, (1) The teaching of the sacred Scriptures: we should search them. We have (2) The promised guidance of the Holy Spirit: we should seek it by prayer. (c)

3. *Exemplary efficiency.* Guided by God, Moses was enabled to deal with the difficulty satisfactorily,—practically to do away with it. Christian ministers should be able efficiently to counsel the people of their charge. Those who

humbly acknowledge their ignorance, search the Scriptures, and seek help of God, will be able to do so. Let all religious instructors copy the example of Moses in this matter.

V. A Divine arrangement for the compensation of those who are unwillingly excluded from religious ordinances.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (verses 9, 12, 14.) Provision is here made for three distinct classes—for the defiled, for the traveller far from home, and for the stranger. For the two former a supplementary Passover is instituted; and for the latter who desired to unite in the observance of the ordinance, liberty to do so is granted. In the directions given to Moses by the Lord, two things are clear and conspicuous—

1. *No one was to be unwillingly deprived of religious ordinances without compensation.*

2. *All must faithfully fulfil the Divine directions in the keeping of such ordi-*

nances as they had access to (verses 11, 12, 14). The three leading points of the original institution are here repeated—that they were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, they were to leave none of it till the next day, and they were not to break a bone of it. The foreigner, also, who kept the feast was to do so with minute accuracy as to the directions concerning it. Compare verse 14 with Exod. xii. 48, 49. And still when any one is involuntarily detained from religious ordinances, God will supply unto him precious and abundant compensations. To the patient sufferer on his bed, to the attentive nurse as she ministers to the afflicted, and to the loving mother at home with her babe, if only the spirit of true worship be theirs, God will graciously reveal Himself, and enrich them with the treasures of His grace. He will be with them; and the chamber of sickness, or the nursery of infancy, shall become a Bethel, "a little sanctuary," sacred with His presence and radiant with His glory. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Previous to your entering into the house of God, seek a *prepared heart*, and implore the blessing of God on the ministry of the Word. It may be presumed that no real Christian will neglect to preface his attendance on social worship with secret prayer. But let the acquisition of a devout and serious frame, freed from the cares, vanities, and pollutions of the world, accompanied with earnest desires after God, and the communications of His grace, form a principal subject of your private devotions. Forget not to implore a blessing on the public ministry, that it may accomplish in yourselves, and to others, the great purposes it is designed to answer; and that those measures of assistance may be afforded to your ministers which shall replenish them with light, love, and liberty, that they may speak the mystery of the Gospel as it ought to be spoken. Pastors and people would both derive eminent advantages from such a practice; they, in their capacity of exhibiting, you, in your preparation for receiving, the mysteries of the Gospel. As the duties of the closet have the happiest tendency, by solemnizing and elevating the mind, to prepare for those of the sanctuary, so the conviction of your having borne your minister on your heart before the throne of grace would, apart

from every other consideration, dispose him to address you with augmented zeal and tenderness. We should consider it as such a token for good, as well as such an unequivocal proof of your attachment, as would greatly animate and support us under all our discouragements.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

(b) A more despicable character I know not than the poor mortal who proclaims his opinions as if they were the very Gospel of God; who denounces all who adopt them not as heretics. I pity the mental serfs, who, instead of drinking at the crystal river of truth, that rolls majestically by, consent to sip at the puddled cisterns of the would-be theological dictators. While around us have been flung, with God-like profusion, the fruits and beauties of a Paradise, shall we consent to confine ourselves to the scanty provisions of a petty kitchen garden? To all the dogmatists who would bind us to their own narrow creed we would say with Pope:—

"Go, wondrous creature! mount where science guides;
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and stem the tide;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
Correct old time and regulate the sun.
Go, teach eternal Wisdom how to rule,
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool."

It is the duty of every man to get convictions of Divine truth for himself, to hold those convictions with firmness, and to promote them with earnestness; but at the same time with a due consciousness of his own fallibility, and with a becoming deference to the judgment of others. Sure am I that he who has penetrated farthest into the realms of truth, wrestled most earnestly with its questions, will be the most free from all bigotry and dogmatism in the proclamation of his views. The more knowledge the more humility. True wisdom is ever modest. Those who live most in the light are the most ready to veil their faces.—*David Thomas, D.D.*

(c) Among all the formative influences which go to make up a man honoured of God in the ministry, I know of none more mighty than his own familiarity with the mercy-seat. All that a college course can do for a student is coarse and external compared with the spiritual and clear refinement obtained by communion with God. While the unformed minister is revolving upon the wheel of preparation, prayer is the tool of the Great Potter by which He moulds the vessel. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, we prevail in private prayer. That we may be strong to labour, tender to sympathise, and wise to direct, let us pray. If study makes men of us, prayer will make saints of us. Our sacred furniture for our holy office can only be found in the arsenal of supplication; and after we have entered upon our consecrated warfare, prayer alone can keep our armour bright.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Moses was but the echo of God's voice; John Baptist "the voice of one crying in the wilderness;" St. Paul "received of the Lord" what he delivered to the Church (1 Cor. xi. 23), and took care that the faith of his hearers "might not be in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. ii. 4, 5). Unwarranted doctrines come not *cum gratia et privilegio*.—*John Trapp, M.A.*

(d) Do not think for a moment that by frequenting places that have an odour of peculiar sanctity you can alone acceptably worship God.

Have you got a contrite heart? That can consecrate the meanest place on earth. It does not matter where the congregation may gather, only let them be a congregation of faithful men, yearning for truth, ready to make any sacrifice to obtain it, and that God who is everywhere present will reveal Himself in blessings wherever they may choose to assemble. They may crowd into the solemn Minster, and while the organ peals out its alternate wail and psalm, to them it may be a spiritual service, and their hearts may glow in purer light than streams through painted windows. They may draw around the hearth of the farmer's homestead, and while the frost-king reigns outside, their spirits may burn with a warmth that may defy the keenness of the sternest winter. For them there may be a spiritual harvest more plentiful than the garnered store in the barn that has been lent for worship; or a season of refreshing beneath the thatch through which the penitent soul can filter up its sighs for heaven. On the gallant vessel's deck, with no witnesses of the service but the sky and sea, there may be the sound of many waters as the Lord of hosts comes down. And in the Alpine solitudes, where the spirit, alone with God mid murmuring streams, and bowing pines, and summits of eternal snow, uplifts its adoration, there may be a whisper stiller, and sweeter, and more comforting than that of nature, saying, "Peace, peace be unto you." Oh! it is a beautiful thought, that in this, the last of the dispensations, the contrite heart can hallow its own temple! Wherever the emigrant wanders—wherever the exile pines—in the dreariest Sahara, rarely tracked save by the Bedouin on his camel—on the banks of rivers yet unknown to song—in the dense woodlands where no axe has yet struck against the trees—in the dark ruin—in the foul cell—in the narrow street—on the swift rail—there where business tramps and rattles—there where sickness gasps, and pines—anywhere—anywhere in this wide, wide world, if there is a soul that wants to worship, there can be a hallowed altar and a present God.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

THE WILFUL NEGLECT OF RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES.

(Verse 13.)

In this verse we have set before us a case of,—

I. The wilful neglect of religious ordinances.

"The man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover." The Passover was instituted by command of God; neither ceremonial uncleanness nor absence from home prevented his observing it;

yet he fails to do so—such is the case which is set before us in the text. In our day the wilful neglect of religious ordinances is painfully prevalent. Churches, chapels, mission halls, and religious services abound; yet in this nominally Christian country there are hundreds of thousands who are in a position to attend public worship, who live in the habitual neglect of it. (a)

II. The wilful neglect of religious ordinances is sinful.

It is said in the text that the man who wilfully forbearth to keep the Passover "shall bear his sin." The worship of God is not optional, but obligatory upon man; it is our duty. He who wilfully neglects religious ordinances by such neglect sins, because he,—

1. *Withholds from God that which is His due.* God has an indefeasible right to our homage. His greatness should excite our awe; His kindness should enkindle our gratitude; His skill should awaken our admiration; His holiness should inspire our adoring love.

2. *Despises the gifts which God bestows.* Worship is a privilege as well as a duty. It is a great kindness on the part of God that He has instituted the ordinances of worship, and great condescension that He graciously accepts our worship. To neglect public worship is to despise the ordinance and reject the gift of God.

3. *Neglects the culture and development of the highest faculties of his being.* Worship is a necessity of our nature. We have religious tendencies and aspirations which seek expression

and satisfaction in worship. We cannot neglect worship without the deepest and most deplorable self-injury. (b) Wilfully to neglect religious ordinances, then, is to sin—to sin against our own nature and against God.

III. The wilful neglect of religious ordinances will be punished.

"The man that is clean and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people," &c. The expression "cut off from among his people" denotes either capital punishment, or exclusion from the society and privileges of the chosen people. The latter seems to us the more probable. No one can neglect religious ordinances without incurring punishment—a punishment which grows directly out of the sin. By his wilful neglect he brings the punishment upon himself.

1. *He foregoes the highest joys of life.*

2. *He dwarfs and degrades his soul.*

3. *He excludes himself from the highest fellowship on earth.*

4. *He renders himself unfit for the fellowship of heaven.* The worship of God here is a natural and necessary preparation for uniting in His worship in the innumerable company of the glorified.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The need of more effort to induce persons who never attend a place of worship to do so seems very great. Thus there are 2,500 people living in one block of buildings in the South of London, of whom not more than 130 frequent public worship. This is a sad fact, and needs the consideration of Christian people.—*"The Christian World," May 10, 1878.*

A very large proportion of the outside world is voluntarily irreligious or indifferent. A very large proportion of those who are not church-goers, who connect themselves with no religious society, and make no profession of religion, reside in the midst of those who do. Intelligent, educated, surrounded by religious influences, it is not through ignorance they remain where they are. Had they the longing for that peace which Christianity gives, they know in general where to find it. Their indifference and irreligion are in a great measure their own choice. No special mission is needed to them, as it is to those who have not their knowledge or their opportu-

nities. They may be reached by the quiet, unobtrusive influence, and by the steady growth of vital religion among their neighbours; by the appeal of a Christian friend in sickness; by the perusal of a book; by the voice of some distinguished preacher whom they are led to hear. This class is very large; it is hindered by causes within rather than without.—*Joseph Mullens, D.D.*

That the religion of the working man is at a low ebb is a fact there can be no disputing. Our churches are for the rich, our chapels for the lower half of the middle class; the working man seldom finds his way to either. The Sunday morning is mostly spent in bed, the afternoon in an indolent and half-apathetic condition, lolling on chairs or sofa, if he has one, nodding and slumbering over *Illustrations*, or the *Weekly Times*; it is only during the few hours of evening that he begins to show any signs of active life. On the Monday he feels more tired, and imagines the day to have been very considerably longer than any other. This is how the majority of London working

men, at least, spend their Sunday, half sad to see it come, and wholly glad when it is over. This is a state of things to be lamented; who can doubt it is only in the degree in which families are happy (to rise to which there must be love, sympathy, confidence, and mutual esteem), that a nation becomes truly great; and this happiness is not possible without religion. We trust the day is not far distant when almost every working man will not only think it a duty to attend public worship, but will feel it a pleasure likewise.—*Eclectic Review*.

(b) Worship is the instinctive act and necessity of the religious consciousness. Its root lies in our recognition of God, and of our personal relationship to Him, its eucharistic element in our sense of His transcendent excellencies, and its supplicatory element in our consciousness of absolute dependence upon Him. We do not, that is, worship in mere compliance with a Divine injunction, nor in

conformity with a conventional cultus, nor as a means of religious benefit. We worship under the impulse of our own religious instincts, because the constitution of our nature being what it is, we cannot without violence to it help doing so. Worship, therefore, has its ultimate reason neither in the sense of obligation, nor in considerations of utility; it is the simple necessity of the religious soul. Hence, in the severest persecutions of the Church, no considerations of personal peril have ever been sufficient to deter Christian men from assembling for social worship. Although there is no direct injunction of public worship, and although the spiritual relationships of the soul are so personal, and find their full expression in acts of personal and private devotion, yet the consecrating impulse of social worship has led men for the sake of it to dare and sacrifice life itself.—*H. Allon, D.D.*

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

(Verses 15, 16.)

I. The Sphere of the Manifestation of the Divine Presence.

“And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony.” Previously the cloud had hung up on high over the camp; but now that the tabernacle is finished it descended and rested upon it. In the tabernacle and in the ordinances of religion God specially manifested Himself. He is everywhere present. The thoughtful mind discovers evidences of His power and skill everywhere. To the religious heart the whole world is a temple resplendent with His glory and resounding with His praise. But still He is specially present in His Church:

1. *By the ministry of the Word.* He speaks to men by His servants as they expound and apply the teachings of His Book.

2. *By the observance of the Sacraments.* To the believer Christ is really and blessedly present in the Sacraments which He instituted.

3. *By the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.* By His Spirit the Lord Jesus abides with His Church. In His material works we see Him as the God of nature; in His Church we see him

as the God of grace and salvation, we realize His helpful and hallowing presence, and hold delightful communion with Him. Comp. Pss. xxvii. 4; cxxxii. 13-16; Matt. xviii. 20. (a)

II. The Aspects of the Manifestation of the Divine Presence.

“The cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of testimony; and at even there was upon the tabernacle, as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.”

1. *The aspect of the manifestation of the Divine Presence was varied.* In the day He appeared in cloud; in the night in the appearance of fire. The Divine Being does not present the same aspects to different minds; nor does He always appear in the same aspects to the same persons. *He* changes not, “with Him is no variableness;” but the forms of His manifestation to His creatures change. Moreover, our vision of Him varies with our varying spiritual conditions and moods.

2. *The aspect of the manifestation of the Divine Presence was varied according to the need of the people.* The diversity of the Divine manifestation was perfectly adapted to the diversity of human need. The cloud by day and

the appearance of fire by night were easily discernible. Mark the precious truth of universal application which is here shadowed forth: God manifests Himself to His people according to their need. To the soul seeking Him in penitence He reveals Himself as a gracious Sovereign or a kind Father waiting to forgive; to the distressed mourner, as the great and tender-hearted Comforter; to the perplexed student of the Divine will and work, as the wise and kind Guide; to the lonely and sad by reason of the bereavements of death, as "the Resurrection and the Life;" &c. With infinite wisdom and goodness He adapts the revelations of His presence and the communications of His grace to our varying circumstances, conditions, and needs. (b)

III. The Permanence of the Manifestations of the Divine Presence.

"So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night." Through the whole of their wanderings the blessed Presence never forsook them. God has never left His Church. The light of His Presence has varied, sometimes burning more brightly than at others; but it has never been

extinguished or withdrawn. The light of the Church has waned in one place, but it has shone the more brightly in another. "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In the abiding presence of our Lord and Saviour with us we have *the guarantee of the continuance, the progress, and the ultimate triumph of His Church over all enemies.* (c)

Conclusion.

1. *Here is admonition for Christians.* The Lord is with us ever, His eye is ever upon us; let us, then, walk circumspectly, &c.

2. *Here is encouragement for Christians.* The Lord is ever present to guide us in our way, to sustain us in difficulty and trial, to defend us from harm, and to conduct us in safety and in triumph to our rest and home with God. Wherefore, let us be of good cheer.

"In thy presence we are happy;
In Thy presence we're secure;
In Thy presence all afflictions
We will easily endure;
In Thy presence we can conquer,
We can suffer, we can die;
Far from Thee, we faint and languish:
Lord, our Saviour, keep us nigh."

W. Williams.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If Louis Napoleon could call a senate of all the potentates in the world in Paris, and hold a congress there, the whole of them put together would not be worth the snap of a finger compared with half-a-dozen godly old women who meet together in the name of Christ as a Church, in obedience to the Lord's command; for God would not be there with the potentates—what cares He for them?—but He would be with the most poor and despised of His people who meet together as a church in Jesus Christ's name. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is more glorious than ermine, or purple, or crown. Constitute a church in the name of Christ, and meet together as such, and there is no assembly upon the face of the earth that can be compared with it, and even the assembly of the first-born in heaven is but a branch of the grand whole of which the assemblies of the Church on earth make up an essential part.—C. H. Spurgeon.

(b) There are in the Bible many allusions to this cloud; all of them indicating its remarkable and peculiar and significant character. Several times we find allusions to it in the book of Psalms. See Psa. lxxviii.

14, cv. 39. We also find it mentioned in Nehemiah ix, 19. And we have a very beautiful allusion, assuming the shape of a cheering promise, in Isaiah iv. 5, 6. We find in all these passages very plain and unmistakeable allusions to this symbol. Now what does it seem to have been? First a luminous fire, in the midst of the darkness of the night; supposed to extend to a mile in height into the sky, as if a great pillar, majestic in appearance, but phosphorescent or luminous and shining. Then in the daytime, when the splendour of a fire would be lost in the greater splendour of the sun, and could not necessarily be a guide to those that sought to follow it, the fire, or the luminous portion of it, retreated into the innermost recesses of the cloud, and a dark pillar, as if made of smoke or of cloud, stretched from the place where the tabernacle rested, a mile upward into the sky. And when God meant that the children of Israel should proceed forward, it marched before them, or moved before them, their signal, their director, and their guide. It was adapted exactly to the circumstances of their journey; a beautiful proof in its being cloud by day, and in its

being fire by night, that God adapts the manifestations of Himself, the supplies of His wisdom, His grace, and His bounty to the peculiar circumstances, necessities, and condition of His believing people. Now, this symbol, as we gather from all the allusions to it scattered through the Scriptures, was a type of Christ, God manifest in the flesh. It was God's mode of revealing Himself to that people in the midst of the desert; and was to them the perpetual pledge of His favourable and gracious presence.—*John Cumming, D.D.*

God rises upon the sight of some Christians as the sun comes right up against a clear sky, and over a sharp-cut horizon, and upon others as the sun comes up behind clouds, which it is his first work to wear out and disperse with His bright beams. I have seen men that never realized God till they were dying. Some never see Him till the midday of their life. Others see Him early in the morning. Some see Him during sickness; some after sickness; some on the occurrence of some special providence. Sometimes Christians are lifted up, through the susceptibility of their imagination, their affections, and their reason, all conjoined, into such an extraordinary sense of God's glory that it seems as though their soul could not abide in the body, and they think, "Praise God! At last He has had mercy on me, and revealed Himself to me"—supposing that He had not before cast the light of His countenance upon them.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) It was enough for the army of Cromwell to know that he was there, the ever-victorious, the irresistible, to lead on his Ironsides to the fray. Many a time the presence of an old

Roman general was equal to another legion; as soon as the cohorts perceived that he was come whose eagle eye watched every motion of the enemy, and whose practised hand led his battalions upon the most salient points of attack, each man's blood leaped within him, and he grasped his sword and rushed forward sure of success. My brethren, our King is in the midst of us, and our faith should be in active exercise—"The shout of a King is in the midst of us," it is said, for where the King is there the people shout for joy, and because of confidence of victory. The preacher may preach, but what is that? but if the King be there, then it is a preaching in very deed. The congregations may have met, and they may have gone again. "The panoramic view which has dissolved," you say. Ah, so it may seem to you, but if the Spirit of God was there, all that has been done will abide, and remain even to that day of judgment, when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. "Nothing but a simple girl sitting down to talk to a few little children about their souls." Just so, but if the Lord be there, what awakens round that spot! If the King Himself sit in that class, what deeds are done that shall make the angels of heaven sing anew for joy! "Nothing but a humble man, unlettered, earnest, but not eloquent, standing at the corner of a street addressing a few hundred people. His talk will soon be forgotten." The footprints of every true servant of the Lord shall not be in the sand, but in the enduring brass, the record of which shall outlast the wreck of matter.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE.

(Verse 16.)

One of the most extraordinary things associated with the journey of God's ancient people was the pillar of cloud and fire. The fame of this wonderful phenomenon was spread abroad among the nations of the earth. There were several miraculous things connected with it that made it differ from other clouds. Its form was never changed. It always maintained its station over the tabernacle, unlike other clouds, that are carried about with the wind and tempest. It preserved its consistency and shape for forty years; while other clouds are either exhaled in the sun, dissipated by the wind, or dissolved in rain or dew, and in a very short time blotted out of the firmament. It moved in a peculiar direction. And,

above all, it was brighter at night than by day. We cannot be mistaken in the typical meaning of this cloud. It must be viewed as a *symbol of the presence and glory of God in the midst of His people* (see Exod. xvi. 10; xix. 9; xxxiv. 5; 1 Kings viii. 10). Notice two things in reference to the presence of God:

I. The Advantages of its Possession.

Let us select some of the advantages to be derived from it by believers on earth:

1. *The distinction it maintains.* The pillar of cloud and fire among the Israelites may be viewed as a token of their being a separate people from other nations. This distinguished them:

they were the only nation that were so privileged. It was a complete division of their forces one from the other (see Exod. xiv. 19, 20). Christians, you are a peculiar people—your origin is peculiar—your character is peculiar—your spirit—your desires and affections—the objects of your pursuit. You have peculiar privileges and honours conferred on you. There is to be a marked difference between you and the world. “No man can serve two masters,” etc.

2. *The guidance it ensures.* All the movements of the Israelites were under the direction of this cloud. God’s presence now goes with His people for their guidance, and shall conduct them safely home. “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” Jesus is now the guide of His people. He leads in the way of truth and wisdom. How? By His *example*. He has gone before us in the path of duty, temptation, and sorrow. By His *Word*. This is our rule. By His *ordinances*. He sends His ministers as your guides. By His *Spirit*, effectually. By the leadings of His *providence*. As the Israelites watched the motion of the cloud, so must we the movements of His providence.

3. *The protection it affords.* This was remarkably the case with the Israelites when pursued by their enemies, the Egyptians. . . . (Psa. lxxvii. 16-20.) How admirably does this apply to the protecting presence of God with His people now. They have their enemies, who thirst for their destruction. How numerous, crafty, and powerful they are! But God is their hiding-place, etc.

4. *The joy it inspires.* God is the source of happiness, the fountain of life. His presence gives joy even in sorrow, and makes us glory in tribulation.

5. *The glory it confers.* What a wondrous, glorious sight must have been the exit of the Israelites out of Egypt, and their encampment in the wilderness. Balaam viewing them from a neighbouring mountain, cried

out in admiration, etc. (See Ch. xxiii. 9, 10). The presence of God is our highest, best, only real glory. But what is all that God confers here to what is in reserve! The partial enjoyment of God’s presence affords some particles of glory; but the full enjoyment of Him shall constitute a weight of glory.

II. The perpetuity of its enjoyment.

“So it was always.” Notwithstanding all the sins and provocations of the Israelites, the cloud did not leave them till they arrived in Canaan. Will not this apply to Christians now in their enjoyment of God’s presence? Observe two things:

1. *Its necessity.* It was indispensably necessary to the Israelites, for the purposes to which we have alluded; and is it less so now? We always need the Divine presence. We are dependent on Him for every thing. We need His providential presence and agency to continue us in being and supply our numerous wants; and we require His gracious presence for the maintenance of spiritual life, and for the reception of spiritual blessings. We need His presence for the duties of life, for consolation in sorrow, for support in temptation, peace in death, and happiness in glory. If we have His presence, we have everything; if we want it, we have nothing.

2. *The manner in which it is ensured.* This may be seen three ways. From what He has done—is doing—and has promised to do. (1) *A retrospect of the past.* May not we say of God’s presence with His Church, “So it was always?” Was not His presence with Abraham? and Moses? and David? and Daniel? And in the New Testament times, was He not with Peter? and Paul? He has never left His Church to the will of her enemies. But come to individual experience. Has He not been with *you*? Recall past scenes, deliverances, comforts, joys. (2) *A view of the present.* Is He not near at hand? always accessible? (3) *A glance at the future.* So it shall be always. How is it ensured? His past

dealings with us would be enough; but we have more. Look at His *promises*. "I will never leave you," etc. Look at the *mediation of His Son*. The death and intercession of Christ ensure it. Look at the *influences of His Spirit*. All combine to testify His con-

tinual care and watchfulness over you.

Conclusion:—

1. *What a privileged character is the Christian.* How many peculiar mercies.

2. *The misery of the ungodly.* Without God. How deplorable!—*Ebenezer Temple.*

THE CLOUDY PILLAR.

(Verses 15-19).

The cloudy pillar may be regarded—

I. As an emblem of Divine truth.

1. *Supernatural as to origin.*

2. *Stable*: only a cloud, yet not dispersed.

3. *Adapted to both night and day.*

4. *Reliable.*

5. *Intolerant*: "This is the way," and no other.

II. As a symbol of Divine Providence.

1. *Different appearance to different characters.*

2. *Presented alternations of aspect to the same people.*

3. *Mysterious in its movements.*

4. *Aims at the good of all who follow its guidance.*

II. As a type of the Divine Saviour.

1. *Mysterious nature.*

2. *Challenges attention.*

3. *His purpose beneficent.*

4. *The source of great comfort.*

5. *Constant in His attachment.*

LEARN,—

(1) Seek to be on the right side of the cloud.

(2) To seek it in the right place—over the tabernacle.

(3) To follow its guidance.—*Biblical Museum.*

THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE GOOD.

(Verses 17-23).

We propose to use these verses as illustrating the Pilgrimage of the People of God. So regarding them they present three main homiletical points for consideration:

I. The infallible Guide in the Pilgrimage of the Good.

In journeying through the desert the Israelites needed constant direction. There were no well-defined roads along which they could travel; there were no beaten tracks of travellers for their guidance; it was customary for "travellers to steer their course as mariners at sea do, by a mathematical chart. But the Israelites went by a better direction." The Lord Himself led them by means of "the fiery, cloudy pillar." "In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." The movement

of the cloud was to them "the commandment of the Lord;" its ascent from the tabernacle was the signal of departure; its descent upon the tabernacle was the signal for halting. Thus Infinite Wisdom was their Guide. In the pilgrimage of our life we also need guidance. There are perils to be avoided, misleading and evil ways to be shunned; and we have not the experience, the skill, or the wisdom to shun these ways and avoid these perils. "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." God is still the Guide of all who acknowledge Him. Compare Psalms xxxii. 8; lxxiii. 24; Prov. iii. 6.

In what way is this guidance now exercised?

1. *By the indications of Providence.* Circumstances sometimes become to us

a guiding pillar, sometimes summoning us to arise and depart, or to pitch our tent and rest awhile. The good man in the combinations of circumstances frequently reads the directions of God.

2. *By the teachings of the Bible, and especially by the example of Jesus Christ as it is there set forth.* "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "When thou goest it shall lead thee For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

3. *By the influences of the Holy Spirit.* He enters into our being, and mysteriously and mightily influences our intellect and heart and will, and works within us deep convictions which lead to corresponding actions. Thus the Divine guidance, though no longer outward and visible, but inward and spiritual, is as real as when He led His people through the wilderness. (a)

II. The perfect Protector in the Pilgrimage of the Good.

The pillar of cloud and of fire was not only a guide, but a protection also to the Israelites. In the passage of the Red Sea it was an impenetrable barrier between them and their Egyptian pursuers. During the scorching heat of the daytime in the desert, like a veil it sheltered them from the fierce rays of the sun. And during the night its brightness shielded them from the attacks of wild beasts. It is a beautiful symbol of the Divine protection of the people of God in their pilgrimage.

1. *This protection was constant.* Night and day, during all their life in the desert, it was never withdrawn. (Comp. Pss. xci. 1-13; cxxi.; John x. 27, 28; 1 Pet. i. 5.)

2. *This protection was adapted to the varying circumstances of the people.* By day it assumed the aspect of a cloud,

and by night that of fire. God is perfectly acquainted with us and with our circumstances, and with infinite skill He adapts His defence to our danger. He renders His faithful servants, and their very garments, utterly insensible to the heat of the furnace, even when it is heated "seven times more than it is wont to be heated." He shuts the mouths of the hungry lions; and to His servant, tried and true, makes their den a place not only of perfect safety, but of angelic fellowship also.

3. *This protection was inviolable.* When this cloud was their shield, not even the mightiest and most malignant force could penetrate it to their hurt. (Comp. Pss. xxvii. 1-3; cxviii. 6; Rom. viii. 31; 1 Pet. iii. 13. (b))

III. The true Spirit in the Pilgrimage of the Good.

The spirit of the Israelites in their wanderings in the desert had two characteristics which are worthy of imitation:

1. *Dependence upon God.* They were uncertain as to the duration of their sojourn in any place; when the cloud came down upon the tabernacle, they did not know whether it would continue there for a few hours, "or two days, or a month, or a year." And with respect to the time of their departure, they did not know "whether by day or by night the cloud" would be taken up. They were entirely dependent upon the will of God in these matters; and, believing that the Divine Presence was in the cloud, they trusted God, and waited and watched for its movements as for His orders. We, too, are dependent upon God in our pilgrimage. Let us endeavour to realize our dependence; let us trust in Him; let us watch the movements of His providence, etc. (c)

2. *Obedience to God.* "The children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord," as indicated by the rising and resting of the cloud. Disobedient and rebellious in many things, yet in this they obeyed the commandment of the Lord. In this let us imitate them; let us make God's "statutes our songs in the

house of our pilgrimage;" let our prayer be, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end." When God commands let us promptly and cheerfully obey; so shall our pilgrimage end in the rest and refreshment, the sanctity and society, the gladness and glory of Home.

Conclusion.

Life here is a pilgrimage in the case of every one. Be it ours to realise the fact; to seek the infallible guidance and inviolable protection of the Shepherd of Israel in our pilgrimage; and to maintain and manifest the true spirit of pilgrims; so shall our pilgrimage be secure, and our rest glorious. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a)

Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile.

J. H. Newman.

(b) The utmost degree of personal security that can be enjoyed under any form of civil power, is a most imperfect shadow of the safety which Jesus Christ bestows upon the subjects of His spiritual reign. Until a man submits to His mediatorial authority, he remains exposed to unutterable evils. He ought to feel perpetual anxiety and alarm; for, in the declared judgment of God, he is in a state of condemnation and death:—"he that believeth not in the Son of God is condemned already"; he that is not "quickened together with Christ Jesus" is "dead in trespasses and sins;" he is a criminal under sentence of execution, and only respite for a brief and uncertain period; the sword of Divine justice, suspended over him, may fall at any moment, and he is lost for ever. This is certainly the condition of every unconverted sinner—every one that has not yielded himself a willing subject to Jesus Christ his Lord. But "Kiss the Son;" yield yourself as such a subject to Him; and from that moment, you are placed in a state of perfect security; you are saved with a great salvation—protected from the wrath of God, from the dread of eternity, from the misery of sin; according to the prophet's beautiful description of our Saviour—"In that day a King shall reign in righteousness; and a man shall be as a covert from the storm, as the shadow of a

great rock in a weary land." The subjects of Jesus Christ, justified by faith, have peace with God. The last donation He promised His disciples was peace:—"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." "My peace!"—the same peace which filled the bosom of the eternal Son of God, when, having finished His work, He was acknowledged by the Father as His "Beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." For, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts"—of His Son, the First-born of many brethren. And (as the Apostle argues) "if God be for us, who shall be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen for us? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" The Church of Christ, as a collective society, is invested with absolute security; it is a city on whose walls is engraven the name, JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, THE LORD IS THERE! it stands fast "like Mount Zion that cannot be moved;" it is founded on a Rock, and that Rock is Christ: He has "all power in heaven and earth" for its preservation; and not "the gates of hell shall prevail against it." But a portion of this general security of the body belongs to every member of it: every believer in Christ enjoys the same; and, as he grows in grace and knowledge, he feels himself at peace with God; this peace keeps and justifies his heart and mind against every assailing trouble; and, on the most trying occasions, he learns to say with humble confidence, "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord."—Robert Hall, A.M.

(c) Everything in their experience taught them their dependence upon God. They were led through a region that no adventurer had ever explored, or foot had ever trod. When they pitched their tents at eventide, they knew not at what hour they should strike them, nor whether they should strike them at all; there might be forced years of encampment in that one spot; there might be forced marches and rapid progress; but they had no control over it: as the pillar went, and wherever the pillar went, they went; and as they sounded forth their matin song of praise there was not a man in the whole congrega-

tion that could tell through what rocky cliffs or woody defiles the echoes of the vesper hymn would sound. Their supply was as miraculous as their guidance. No plough had turned up the soil, no river murmured by their side; they never gazed for forty years upon one solitary blossom of the spring time, nor the golden grain ever once in their sight bent gracefully to the sickle of the reaper; they were fed with manna which they knew not.

"When faint they were and parched with drought,
Water at His word gushed out."

Oh! it is the world's grandest illustration of man's absolute feebleness and of God's eternal power. 600,000 fighting men, besides women and children, led by Divine leadership, and fed by Divine bounty, for the space of forty years. Brethren, the dealings of Providence with ourselves are intended to show us our dependence upon God, and to humble us in the dust under His mighty hand. We are very proud sometimes, and we talk about our endowments, and we boast largely of what we have done, and what we intend to do; but we can do absolutely nothing. The athletic frame—how soon can He bring it down! The well-endowed heritage—how soon can He scatter it! The mental glance, keen and piercing—how soon can He bring upon it the dimness and bewilderment of years! We cannot any one of us, bring ourselves into being; we cannot, any one of us, sustain ourselves in being for a moment. Alas! who of us can stay the spirit when the summons has gone forth that it must die?—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(d) We are all upon a journey. We are walking either by faith or by sight. We have either committed our destiny to God, or

we have taken it under our own care. Can you order your own destiny as well as God? Would you rather trust your own eye than the eye of Omniscience? I address some who have no other care than to walk with God. With firm hold of His hand they wander on, knowing that He will lead them by a path they have not known. Happy the people that are in such a case! They are what they are by the grace of God,—that grace which stands for ever revealed and honoured in the Person and work of Jesus. And now we are going on: the road is often mountainous, and many a wild beast prowls upon it; but we are obeying God, and obedience ensures perpetual joy. It is God's to lead; it is man's to follow. We are going to a land of which Canaan was but a poor emblem,—we advance toward a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God! If the road is sometimes dreary, the Guide is ever safe. God hath not permitted imagination to conceive the end. Fancy's mighty wing cannot soar to the altitude of such sublimity. It remains a mystery till our eyes are closed in death. Be it ours to move our tent and erect our altar as God may direct. We shall in due time exchange the tent for an ever-during mansion, and our prayer shall burst into praise. Our journey hath an end,—its name is HEAVEN. But what is involved in that term "heaven," we can never know on earth. Loiter not in the way. The shadows deepen. One star more ventures than others is already twinkling, and telling of the coming night. *Up! my brethren,—FORWARD, ye hosts of God!*

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him we roam,
Yet nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE CLOUD TARRYING.

(Verse 22.)

The Israelites were favoured by God with the pillar of fire and cloud. Hereby they were reminded of His special presence, and instructed as to His will. If it moved, they must journey; if it tarried, they must encamp. Let us describe these seasons, when the cloud tarried. Remembering although we have no visible symbol of the Divine will, yet we are not ignorant of His mind. If Israel of old had the cloud, we have the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit to teach us

I. A word of description.

The time "the cloud tarried" was:

1. *One of rest.* Such times in our experience. Blessed tranquillity. Sweetest fellowships with each other.

2. *One of spiritual activity.* Then they worshipped in the tabernacle, etc. Use your opportunities. Go while you can to the means of grace.

3. *Peculiarly a time of temptation.* Remember Taberah and the consuming fire, Num. xi. 1; Hazeroth and Miriam's leprosy, Num. xii. 10; remember the fiery serpents, and the blasphemy of Sinai. In these haltings the people sinned most grievously.

II. A word of exhortation.

1. *Be more anxious to keep the cloud in sight than to see it tarry.* We are responsible for the one, but not for the other. We must strive to delight more in God's will, than in what we desire.

2. *Be more anxious to improve than enjoy these refreshing times.* Times like these are for holy labour as well as for peaceful quiet and contemplation. Think not that Nathanael was always sitting beneath the fig tree.

3. *Be more anxious to improve than prolong these periods.* Seek not so much a protracted as a useful life. Strive to use seasons of rest and prosperity, rather than marring them by over-anxiety about the morrow.

III. A word of caution.

1. *If the cloud tarry long, think not it will never move.* The Church, the home, the soul must have vicissitudes. Activity is necessary to every form of life. Rest should be the preparation ! time for exertion.

2. *Be not impatient if it tarry when you wish to journey.* It does rest sometimes over a desert land. Such is life to some of you aged ones. There were most arid deserts in the confines of Canaan.

3. *Be ready, that whenever the cloud moves you may be ready to journey.* Whether it be to go forward to the fight, to the Elim of plenty, or the land of promise.—*R. A. Griffin.*

CHAPTER X.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verses 1-10. Instructions for signalling the movements of the camp are properly inserted here as one of the necessary preliminaries for the march which was about to commence.

Verse 2. *Two trumpets.* "The trumpet (*khatsotserah*) was a straight instrument, differing in this respect from the curved horn or cornet (*keren*, *shophar*); yet the latter is frequently rendered 'trumpet' in the A. V., when the two instruments are not mentioned together. The Jewish trumpet is described (Joseph. 'Ant.' iii. 12.6) as 'a little less than a cubit in length; the tube narrow, a little thicker than a flute, and just wide enough to permit the performer to blow it; while it terminated, like other trumpets, in the form of a bell.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

At this time only two trumpets were ordered. Two only were required, inasmuch as they were to be used only by the priests, of which at this time there were only two. When there were more priests there were also more trumpets. Comp. 1 Chron. xv. 24; 2 Chron. v. 12.

Verse 3. The blowing of both the
156

trumpets was the signal for convening the great assembly, composed of all the representatives of the entire congregation, viz., the heads of families, the princes of the tribes, the elders, judges, *et al.*

Verse 4. The blowing of one trumpet only was the signal for a more select assembly, composed merely of the heads of the clans and the princes of the tribes.

Verse 7. Expositors are not agreed as to the difference between the signal for assembly and the signal of alarm. Henry, Trapp, *et al.* hold that the alarm was a broken, quavering, interrupted sound; and the signal for assembly a continued equal sound. Keil and Del. and the Speaker's Comm. propound the opposite view: that for an alarm a long continuous peal was to be blown, and for an assembly short sharp notes. Dr. A. Clarke suggests that the alarm consisted of *short, broken, sharp tones*, terminating with *long ones*, blown with both the trumpets at once. It is perhaps impossible to determine which of these interpretations is correct.

Verse 9. The trumpets were blown

by the priests in war as an expression of the dependence of Israel on the help of God. (Comp. ch. xxxi. 6; 2 Chron. xiii. 12, 14.)

Verse 11. This verse is the beginning of the second great division of the book. The preparations for the march being completed, the camp is broken up, and they set out on their march to Canaan.

Verse 12. *The cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.* This statement seems to be made by anticipation, as we find that the desert of Paran was the third station: Kibroth-Hattaavah being the first, and Hazeroth, the second (ch. xi. 35; xii. 16). Notes on "the wilderness of Paran" will be more suitable on ch. xii. 16, than in this place.

And here, at the beginning of the journeyings, we may as well mention the difficulties of tracing them accurately, especially after the arrival in the desert of Paran. For, as Mr. Hayman observes, "we have not merely to contend with the fact that time has changed the desert's face in many parts, and obliterated old names for new; but we have beyond this, great obscurity and perplexity in the narrative. The task is, first, to adjust the uncertainties of the record *inter se*, and then to try and make the resultant probability square with the main historical and physical facts, so long as the latter can be supposed to remain unaltered. Besides the more or less discontinuous form in which the sacred narrative meets us in Exodus, a small portion of Leviticus, and the greater part of Numbers, we have in Num. xxxiii. what purports at first sight to be a complete skeleton route so far as regards nomenclature; and we further find in Deuteronomy a review of the leading events of the wandering—or some of them—without following the order of occurrence, and chiefly in the way of allusion expanded and dwelt upon. Thus the authority is of a three-fold character. And as, in the main narrative, whole years are often sunk as uneventful, so in the itinerary of Num. xxxiii., on a near view great chasms occur, which

require, where all else bespeaks a severe uniformity of method, to be somehow accounted for. But, beyond the questions opened by either authority in itself, we have difficulties of apparent incongruity between them; such as the omission in Exodus of Dophka and Alush, and of the encampment by the Red Sea; and, incomparably greater, that of the fact of a visit to Kadesh being recorded in Num. xiii. 26, and again in xx. 1, while the itinerary mentions the name of Kadesh only once."

We shall endeavour to offer some hints on these difficulties as they arise in our course; but it seemed desirable to call attention to their existence at the beginning of the march from Sinai.

Verse 13. *And they first took their journey, etc.* "Rather, 'And they journeyed' (or set forth) 'in the order of precedence according to (*i.e.*, established by) the commandment of the Lord,' etc. The meaning of the Hebrew word for 'first' seems determined by its use in the following verse, where it applies to the camp of Judah going before the rest. This order of precedence is described in verses 14-28."—*Speaker's Commentary*.

Verse 14. *According to their armies.* "Cf. I. 3. There were three tribal hosts in each camp; and each tribe had, of course, its sub-divisions."—*Ibid*.

Verse 17. When the tabernacle was taken down the Gershonites and the Merarites set forward with the materials of which it was composed, so that at the place of the next encampment they might set it up again, before the arrival of the Kohathites (who followed after, verse 21) with the sacred vessels, etc. So that during the march, the place of the tabernacle, in the midst of the host, was represented by the sacred furniture of the sanctuary, in charge of the Kohathites.

Verse 29. *Hobab, the son of Reuel, etc.* There is some uncertainty as to the relation of Hobab to Moses. Here he would seem to be the son of Moses' father-in-law. But in Judg. iv. 11, he is spoken of as "the father-in-law of Moses." The preponderance of evidence

seems in favour of his being the brother-in-law of Moses. The Hebrew word translated "father-in-law" may be used to express any relation by marriage. Raguel, or Reuel, who was also named Jethro, was the father-in-law of Moses (Exod. ii. 18 ; iii. 1). He had departed from the camp of Israel previous to their arrival at Sinai (Exod. xviii. 27) ; whereas Hobab obtained a settlement with them in the land of Canaan (compare Judg. i. 16 : iv. 11). Moreover the request of Moses that he would accompany them as their guide seems to imply that he was a younger man than the father-in-law of Moses must have been at this time. We conclude that Hobab was the son of Reuel or Jethro, and consequently the brother-in-law of Moses.

Verse 31. *Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.* "Hobab may have been of great use to the Israelites, with respect both to guiding their parties to

wells and springs in the desert, and to giving them notice where they might find fuel. But besides this, the sacred history expressly mentions several journeys undertaken by detachments of the Israelites, while the main body remained still : so in chap. xiii. we read of a party sent out to reconnoitre the land of Canaan ; in chap. xx. of the messengers sent from Kadesh to the King of Edom ; in chap. xxxi. of an expedition against the idolatrous Midianites ; of some little expeditions in the close of chap. xxxii. ; and more journeys of the like kind were, without doubt, undertaken, though they are not particularly recounted. Moses, foreseeing this, might well beg Hobab to accompany him, not as a single Arab, but as the prince of a clan to supply conductors for these detached parties, while the body of the people, and the cloud of the Lord continued stationary."—*Harmer*.

THE SILVER TRUMPETS, OR THE RELATION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY TO THE SEASONS AND SERVICES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

(Verses 1-10.)

Let us notice the following preliminary points :

First : *The trumpets and their use were commanded by God.* He enjoins their use as means to secure order and progress. He blesses men, saves men by the use of the means which He has appointed.

Second : *The trumpets were to be blown by the priests.* Every Christian is now a priest ; but the ministers of the Gospel are especially the heralds of the Divine messages : it is especially incumbent upon them to blow the silver trumpet of the Gospel.

Third : *The trumpets were to be blown in accordance with clear and well-understood instructions.* When they were to blow one trumpet only, and when they were to blow both ; when the short, sharp, broken notes, and when the long and continuous peal—these things were clearly explained and enjoined. There was to be no uncertainty as to the

meaning of the signals. The meaning of the sounds of the Gospel trumpet should be equally and unmistakeably clear. (Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 7, 8.)

Fourth : *The trumpets were to be blown at different seasons and for different purposes*—for conventions, for journeyings, for battles, for festivals, etc. In this we have an illustration of the *Relation of the Gospel Ministry to the seasons and services of the Christian life.* We proceed to offer some hints on the analogy. The silver trumpets were used—

I. For the calling of assemblies.

"Use them for the calling of the assembly. And when they shall blow with them," etc., verses 3, 4. In the assemblies of the Church of Jesus Christ for conference, or instruction, or worship, the ministry of the Gospel should be heard. The Word of God has a clear and precious relation to the peaceful engagements of holy worship. In such seasons the Christian minister

should lead the people into the green pastures of spiritual instruction, and by the still waters of pure refreshment. The ministry of the Gospel should draw men together, even as the silver trumpets convened the assemblies of Israel.

(a)

II. For summoning the people to advance.

"Use them for the journeying of the camps. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps," etc. (Vers. 5, 6.) The Christian minister is required to summon the people to arise and "go forward" in their upward pilgrimage. He summons them to advance—

1. *In personal holiness.* He exhorts them to "follow on to know the Lord," to "grow in grace," to "forget those things which are behind," etc. (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) It is his to

"Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

(b)

2. *In personal and collective usefulness.* He should incite both individuals and churches to more diligent and devoted services in the cause of Christ. The true Gospel ministry will never allow the Church to sink into an inglorious and indolent rest; but as with the blast of a trumpet will rouse it to continuous effort and to interminable progress.

III. For encouraging the people in battle.

"And if you go to war in your land against the enemy," etc., verse 9. "Great force is in the sound of instruments, of any sort, to stir up both courage and cheerfulness in the hearers of them." But these trumpets were blown to express their dependence upon God, and to inspire their faith in Him. Like the priests with the silver trumpets the minister of the Gospel should—

1. *Encourage Christians to battle against evil.* Many are the motives which he may employ for this purpose, e.g., the righteousness of the warfare, the glory of the great Leader, the certainty of victory, etc. (c)

But, as the priests with the silver trumpets, so the Christian minister is

to encourage Christians in their battle against evil—

2. *By inviting them to trust in God.* He gives the victory. We conquer through Him. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "We are more than conquerors through Him, that loved us." "Above all taking the shield of faith," etc. "Fight the good fight of faith," etc.

"The world cannot withstand

Its ancient Conqueror ;

The world must sink beneath the hand,

That arms as for the war :

This is our victory !

Before our faith they fall ;

Jesus hath died for you and me ;

Believe, and conquer all."

C. Wesley.

IV. For suitably observing seasons of special interest.

"Also in the day of your gladness," etc. (verse 10). Here are three seasons specified at which the trumpets were to be blown, and to which Christianity has a relation and a ministry.

1. *Seasons of joy.* "In the days of your gladness ye shall blow with the trumpets," etc. The Gospel aims at the consecration and promotion of human gladness. "That My joy might remain in you, and your joy might be full." "Rejoice in the Lord alway." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Gospel forbids no pure delight, but hallows and increases it.

2. *Seasons of solemnity.* "In your solemn days ye shall blow with the trumpets," etc. There are many solemn days in life—days of mental conflict, of spiritual darkness, of social bereavement, etc. In such days the hopeful and helpful sounds of the Gospel trumpet are peculiarly precious.

3. *Closing and commencing seasons.* "And in the beginnings of your months ye shall blow," etc. "The return of the new moons was announced by the sounding of the silver trumpets; and in this way provision was made for

keeping up a knowledge of the end and commencement of each month." And as one period of time comes to an end, and we look back upon its opportunities and privileges gone for ever, and gone when we, alas, how often! have made but little use of them, that Gospel which tells of free and full forgiveness is very precious. And as we look forward to periods of time which are yet in the future, with their manifold and serious possibilities, the voice of that trumpet which announces "Grace to help in time of need," and strength proportioned to our day, is most gladly welcomed by us.

To all the varying scenes and circumstances of life the Gospel ministry, like the silver trumpets, has an important and beneficent relation.

And we have a twofold intimation that God would bless this institution of the blowing of the silver trumpets. "Ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. . . . That they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God."

If He blessed even the blowing of trumpets, when performed in obedience to Him, will He not much more bless the ministry of the Gospel of His Son?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The trumpet was the sacred joyful sound in old Palestine, the silver trumpets blown by the priests of the sons of Aaron. The trumpet proclaimed the opening of the year, the trumpet proclaimed the commencement of the sabbatical year, the trumpet proclaimed the year of Jubilee that was kept by the Israelites, the feast of trumpets, and the tone of the trumpet mingled with their most solemn feasts and domestic scenes:

"Then rose the choral hymn of praise,
The trump and timbrel answered keen,
And Judah's daughters poured their lays,
The priests' and warriors' voice between."

Conceive such an evening as this in that delightful land; it is the evening of the sixth day, our Friday; the sky is peaceful, it is the wilderness; among those crags are the foes of Israel's race; there is the tabernacle; there is the cloud about to yield to the fire; a star or two has already appeared; reverently waiting and expecting, the labourers are reposing from their day's toil; the sun is setting, and darkness approaching. Hark! hark! this is the peal of the silver trumpet over the waste, and the tool is dropped; instantly all labour ceases—and it is more, it is the commencement of the sabbatical year! Yonder Philistines may put their own interpretation on it, and say, Their sabbath is begun; but we can say "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."—*E. P. Hood.*

Amazing is the power of sound; it searches the soul more than vision; it vibrates and reverberates—sound more immediately and more deeply penetrates. Nothing presented to the eye tingles along the body like things presented to the ear. Sound thrills in a wood at night, in loneliness and darkness; the fall of leaves, the stir of creatures in the grass, and a thousand nameless sounds, stir the feeling of mystic awe. Sight is finite; the imagination plays more freely among sounds—

the forms are unshaped—the powers are more abiding. Memory—attention—seems to take a deeper hold upon the things presented in sound than in sight. And hence, the preacher is a trumpet. The birth of the Society of Friends was in this wise: George Fox was one of the most stirring trumpets of the Church; in the power he possessed by his holy earnestness to rouse men he shows in an eminent manner what "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" may be. And Whitefield was such a trumpet. Men heard and trembled. A mysterious fearfulness shook the souls of listeners; it must have been as when the prophet stood on the mount, and the Lord passed by in the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire, and broke in pieces the rocks; they were the announcements of danger, and wreck, and death. . . .

There are trumpets—they startle and surprise, indeed; but even the trumpet has another purpose; it marshals into order, it becomes motive, beneath its inspiring strains men fall into ranks and march, and it becomes not merely a blast—a breath—its tones fall into the harmonies and melodies of other instruments. *Ibid.*

(b) If a man would be a Christian after Christ's type of Christianity, he must aim at making progress continually. His life must be a continual endeavour from the well to the better, from the better to the best. The summit of his attainment of yesterday must be the starting-point for his venture of to-morrow. He must not go to his rest upon the reputation of old victories, or beneath laurels won so long ago that they have absolutely faded from their greenness by the lapse of time. Every morning of his life must light him to a fresh battle-field; every evening of his life must set upon some vanquished lust or slain desire. He must fix his eye on Jesus, and long and strive to be like him. He must trample upon every sin, and he must exhibit every grace

which was formerly lacking, until he stands out as the new creature in Christ Jesus the Lord. Brethren, this must of necessity be the aim of every Christian's life. He must grow if he would live. If he would ascertain his sense of the Divine favour, he must constantly aim at conformity to the Divine image. Nothing short of perfection must be the ideal standard after which we aim. In the world around us the selectest models are uniformly chosen. The young sculptor, and the embryo poet, are thrilled with high exultation; but it is to wield a Phidias's mallet, or to sweep a Homer's lyre. The young soldier gazes at reverent distance upon some hero of a hundred fights; but it is that he may be brave and honoured as he. Visions of fame and fortune flit before the young aspirant's eye, only to be embodied in some renowned statesman, or some wealthy millionaire. And why are all these models chosen, but that each, in his own sphere,

may reach or approximate perfection? Worldlings would scorn to aim at a mark less high, or to set before them a standard inferior to themselves. Let them shame you, Christians, into a holier ambition to-day.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(c) Give me to feel that the strongest will win; that he who has most arm will have most wealth and most enjoyment generally in life; give me to feel that the weakest must go to the wall, however good he be, and I cease to be a man; I lose many of the qualities which redeem men from the utmost vulgarity and bestiality! But tell me that the highest strength is spiritual, that the noblest power is the power of ideas, the power of love; give me to feel that God is watching the battle, and that eventually He will make right victorious, and instantly I start my life from new centres, I am controlled by new and higher considerations.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE SILVER TRUMPETS.

(Verse 2.)

"Make thee two trumpets of silver,"

We see God's all-pervading care. He directs all things for His people's weal. Their least arrangements are arranged in heaven. Each little matter on the earthly stage is offspring of decree. There are no trifles in a soul's career. Make conscience of each trivial event. It has an influence on eternity. When God appears to order two Silver Trumpets for the camp, surely He stamps all little things with magnitude.

The material must be silver. Emblem of rare purity. Compare Psalms xii. 6. xciii. 5. Ministers should precede with silver brightness. The flock should follow, as silver without alloy.

Draw nearer to the camp. Two priests are seen. Each blows a Silver Trumpet. Light falls hence on the office of God's ministers. Their voice should sound with trumpet-clearness through the flock. They are entrusted with God's message to a fallen world. . . . The Silver Trumpets sent a piercing note. So should the Gospel-herald utter aloud the Gospel news. Let statements be clear, as the sun without one cloud—pellucid as the crystal stream—distinct as the un-muffled trumpet's voice.

M

The Trumpets were of one piece. So is the Gospel-message. It is not partly works. Christ is All. No diverse metal soiled these Trumpets. No intermingling error should soil pulpits.

The type, moreover, fixes attention on the Christian as a worshipper—a pilgrim—a warrior—a son of joy. For let the occasions on which these Trumpets sounded be now more closely marked.

I. They call the people to God's sanctuary.

It is a Gospel-ordinance, that worshippers should throng the holy courts—that public prayer and praise should reverence the glorious name. A saintly congregation is an antepast of heaven. The faithful meet to honour God. They honour and are honoured. They come in faith, and they depart in peace. Think not that such assemblage is superfluous. Doubtless God is not linked to means. He can bless in solitude, and hear in the secluded closet. But it has pleased Him to order public worship. His commands are always gain. Faith hears, obeys, and finds obedience to be wealth.

II. They give command to march.

Christians are portion of a marching host. Earth is not our rest. We live a stranger-life. We hold a pilgrim-staff. Our home is far away. Let all be ready for departure. Death should not find a Christian unprepared. When it appears let there be no tremor—no surprise—no work unfinished. The Gospel's Silver Trumpets ever cry, Arise, Depart. Come up hither.

III. They sound for war.

The life of faith is one incessant fight. Beneath the Cross a sword is drawn, of which the scabbard is cast far away. The foes are many—mighty—wily—restless. They are without—around—within. Count, if you can, the hateful legions who compose hell's hosts: they all rush at the soul. Survey the world—its snares, etc. Behold the heart, and all its brood of lusts and raging passions. The Gospel-trumpet ever cries, Battle is near. Stand firm. Resist. But when the Gospel calls, it promises sure triumph. It gives an armour wrought of God. It points to

a Captain, beneath whose banner no warrior was ever slain. Believer, hear, and go forth in hope, etc.

IV. In the grand feasts they cheer the worshippers around the bleeding victims.

The precept is obeyed; "Sing aloud," etc. (Psa. lxxxi. 1.) Believer, thus, too, the Gospel teaches you to joy, when you in faith contemplate, and in worship plead the meritorious death of Christ. My soul, obey, remember Calvary, and pour forth music of delight.

The Gospel-trumpet is now within your hearing. But it is prelude of another clang (1 Thess. iv. 16). Are you prepared? If you heed now the Gospel-trumpet calling you to Him, you will hear then the last-day trumpet calling you to glory.

It is faith's happiest hour when it goes forth in spirit to intermingle in the fast-coming scene (1 Cor. xv. 51-55).

This trumpet soon will sound. Bless Jesus—and fear not.—*Henry Law, D. D.*

THE RESTING AND THE RISING OF THE GOOD.

(Verses 11, 12.)

These verses suggest—

I. That the people of God are sometimes called to remain, as it were, stationary for a time in this life.

For nearly twelve months Israel remained in the desert of Sinai, without making any advance, as regards locality, to the Promised Land. In our individual lives there are sometimes seasons of quiet and rest, in which we live our life and work our work without any apparent change: no sickness seizes us reminding us of our mortality; no great loss or sharp sorrow shakes our tabernacle or tells us of our pilgrim state; no disturbing influence reaches us, crying, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." In our family life occasionally there are similar occasions; when there is a long exemption from the visitations of death, and the strokes of affliction and grief seem far removed, and no great change takes

place in the home circle. And in the larger circle of our friends, events sometimes move on serenely for months without any shock; and our pleasant intercourse is not interrupted by any trumpet-call to march onward. These are seasons of quiet rest and precious privileges. And even as the sojourn at Sinai was for wise and most important ends, so these seasons of rest have their sacred uses and obligations: in them we have lessons to learn for ourselves and services to render to others, which cannot well be accomplished in anxious and laborious times. (*a*)

II. Though the people of God may appear to remain stationary for a time, yet there is no permanent settlement in this world.

The Israelites made a long halt in the desert of Sinai; but it was only a halt; it was not a settlement. Pauses in the march have their use; and when

that use is accomplished, orders to resume the march are at once given. Abiding rest is not in this world. The home of the soul is not here. The longest season of tranquillity and repose is at length broken. The most protracted life has its end. We are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (b)

III. That both the restings and the risings of the people of God are ordered by Him.

"The cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys," etc. The rising of the cloud was the Divine signal for their departure; the resting of the cloud, for their encampment. "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." "And guided them in the wilderness like a flock." And God is still the Guide of His people. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the

Lord." (See our notes on chapter ix. 17-23). (c)

IV. That the people of God, whether resting or marching, are protected by Him.

In the cloud which preceded them on the march, and overshadowed them in their encampments, the Lord was present for their protection. God is the Guardian of His people. "God our shield." "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion," etc. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Compare Psalms xci. 1-13; cxxi. (See our notes on chap. ix. 17-23.) (d)

Learn, in conclusion, to—

1. *Gratefully appreciate and diligently use the seasons of quiet rest in life.*

2. *Remember that, however long and grateful a rest may be granted unto us, we are only pilgrims here. Be ready to arise and depart when the cloud arises.*

3. *Follow the guidance of God.*

4. *Trust the protection of God.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) "Rest a while!" Why, it is a *mother's* word; she says to her little weary child who has toddled itself out of breath, "Rest a while." It is the word of a great, generous, noble-hearted leader of men. He says, "My company must have rest. I know I am sent to gain victories and conquests, and to work great programmes; but in the meantime my over-worked men must have rest." It is a gentle word. Where do you find such gentleness as you find in Jesus Christ? *Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. Look at the mower on the summer's day, with so much to cut down ere the sun sets. He pauses in his labour—is he a sluggard? He looks for his stone, and begins to draw it up and down his scythe, with rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink, rink-a-tink—Is that idle music? Is he wasting precious moments? How much he might have mown while he has been ringing out those notes on his scythe! But he is sharpening his tool, and he will do far more when once again he gives his strength to those long sweeps which lay the grass prostrate in rows before him. Even thus a little pause prepares the mind for greater service in the good cause. Fishermen must mend their nets, and we must every now and then repair our mental waste and set our machinery in order for future service. To tug the oar from day to day, like a galley-slave who knows no holidays, suits

not mortal men. Mill streams go on and on forever, but we must have our pauses and our intervals. Who can help being out of breath when the race is continued without intermission? Even beasts of burden must be turned out to grass occasionally; the very sea pauses at ebb and flow; earth keeps the Sabbath of the wintry months; and man, even when exalted to be God's ambassador, must rest or faint; must trim his lamp or let it burn low; must recruit his vigour or grow prematurely old. It is wisdom to take occasional furlough. In the long run we shall do more by sometimes doing less.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) "Strangers and pilgrims." That is the Christian view of life. Christians are all travellers, through a country they cannot stay in; travellers, blessed be God, towards a home, but all travellers; some seemingly going through swiftly, buoyantly, with a high head and an open eye; some foot-sore, jaded, sleepy; some with a chariot of fire, as if the horses of God were whirling them onwards before the eyes of an admiring Church; splendid saints, the tune of whose worship goes manly. Some heavy-hearted, heavy-limbed, but still crawling onwards, feeling, perhaps, no less than the others that here they have no continuing city, but that they seek one to come. Limping by the wayside, but still creeping humbly and bravely on.—*Harry Jones, M.A.*

(c) A journey may be the outcome of an inspiration. "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will." I feel life to be most solemn when I think that inside of it all there is a Spirit that lays out one's day's work, that points out when the road is on the left, and when it is on the right, and that tells one what words will best express one's thought. Then is God nigh at hand and not afar off. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." And thus, too, men are misunderstood: they are called enthusiastic, and are said to be impulsive; they are not "safe" men; they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and no proper register of their life can be made. Of course, we are to distinguish between inspiration and delusion, and not to think that every noise is thunder. We are not to call a "maggot" a "revelation." What we are to do is this: We are to live and move and have our being in God; to expect His coming and long for it; to be patient and watchful; to keep our heart according to His word; and then we shall know His voice from the voice of a stranger, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." If God be our supreme consciousness He will reveal His providence without cloud or doubtfulness. I think it can be proved that the men who have done things apparently against all reason have often been acting in the most reasonable manner, and that inspiration has often been mistaken for madness. I feel that all the while you are asking me to give you tests by which you may know what is inspiration, you have little or nothing to do with such tests,—you have to be right and then you will be sure to do right.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) I do not think of the pillar of cloud as being simply a column of smoke arising from the centre of the Tabernacle; it was such, but besides that it covered the whole camp as a vast canopy or pavilion, so that in the great and terrible wilderness they fainted not under the burning heat of the sun, but this pillar of cloud interposed a friendly shade, so that they passed through the wilderness beneath the wings of God. At night their encampment would have been like a great city wrapped in darkness, but the pillar of fire supplied them a light far superior to that which glows in London or in Paris through the art of man; that great flaming pillar lit up every habitation, so that in point of fact there was no night there. They were always sheltered by God, both by day and by night. If they strayed away from the camp for a little time in the heat of the sun, they had only to come flying back, and there that emblem of the present God became their shelter; or at night, if they wandered for awhile, that vast blazing lampion conducted them back again to their place of rest. So it is with us. In nights of trouble and grief, the fire of Divine comfort glows within us, the precious promises are round about us, and we rejoice in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; and when by day we travel over this burning wilderness to the rest appointed, God interposes perpetually the sweet presence of His love to screen us from the sharper sorrows of the world, that we may still, while walking onward to heaven, behold the shield of heaven uplifted above our heads.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

ASPECTS OF HUMAN PILGRIMAGE.

(Verses 13-28.)

These verses suggest the following remarks:

I. That human pilgrimage should be prosecuted in accordance with Divine directions.

"And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses." The march proceeded in the order prescribed in chap. ii. In the pilgrimage of life the directions of God should be faithfully followed. This will appear if we consider—

1. *The infinity of the knowledge of God.* He knows us altogether and perfectly; He knows the road which we have to travel, and the events

which await us, and the circumstances through which we must pass in the future. The minutest circumstances cannot be hidden from Him, and the greatest event He fully comprehends. He has the knowledge which is necessary for efficiently directing our path through life.

2. *The depth and tenderness of God's interest in man.* He exercises the kindest care towards every man. There is not a creature in the world but is cared for by Him. And man, who is at the head of His creations in this world, is the object of His special regard. Comp. Matt. vi. 25-34. His kind interest in us affords a guarantee that in directing our path through life He will

ever aim at the realization of our best interests.

3. *The supremacy of God's authority over man.* He has a right to issue commands for our guidance. As our Creator and Sustainer, and especially as our wise and kind Father, His authority over us is most absolute and sacred. When they were condemning Socrates for teaching the people their duties to God, he replied, "O ye Athenians, I will obey God rather than you; and if you would dismiss me and spare my life on condition that I would cease to teach my fellow-citizens, I would rather die a thousand times than accept the proposal." How much more should we recognise and bow loyally to His authority! "He shall choose our inheritance for us." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." His appointments concerning us are always infinitely wise and kind. (a)

II. In human pilgrimage the arrangements and provisions for Divine worship should be matters of primary concern.

"And the Tabernacle was taken down, and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle. . . . And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and" (the Gershonites and Merarites) "did set up the tabernacle against they came." Thus it was arranged that the Tabernacle should in every encampment be erected in readiness to receive the Ark and the most holy things. The arrangements for the worship of the Lord were regarded as of the first importance. In like manner we find that wherever Abraham pitched his tent, "there he builded an altar unto the Lord" (see Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4, 18). The conduct of these ancient saints in this respect is—

1. *A rebuke to many nominal Christians*, who in their changes of residence make the arrangements and provisions for worship a very inferior consideration. (b)

2. *An example to all Christians* who contemplate a change of residence. (c)

III. In human pilgrimage the most reverent care should be exercised in relation to sacred things.

"And the Kohathites set forward bearing the sanctuary." Their station was in the midst of the host: thus the most holy things, of which they had charge, were in the place of the greatest safety and the highest honour during the march. Here is an example for us. Let things around which tender and precious memories cluster be highly esteemed and jealously guarded; let things dedicated to sacred uses be reverently regarded and piously cared for.

IV. In human pilgrimage the weak and the wandering should be tenderly cared for.

"And the standard of the camp of Dan set forward, the rearward of all the camps," etc. The squadron of Dan came last, and was called the rearward or gathering host (Josh. vi. 9, margin) because they gathered up those who lagged behind—the lame, the faint, and the feeble—and took care that none were lost or left behind. God is solicitous for the salvation of the weak and the wandering. Our Lord is careful to lose none of His followers (John xvii. 12). "He gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young." "He has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." In like manner "we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," and to strive to restore the erring. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one," etc.

Conclusion:

In our pilgrimage let us diligently cultivate this spirit of loyal obedience and reverent worship towards God, and of kind ministries towards our fellow men.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You are to consider that the position which you occupy is, all things considered, the most advantageous that you could possibly have occupied for doing the utmost that you are capable of doing for the glory of God. Suppose the mole should cry, "How could I have honoured the great Creator if I could have been allowed to fly!" it would have been very foolish, for a mole flying would have been a very ridiculous object, while a mole fashioning its tunnels and casting up its castles is viewed with admiring wonder by the naturalist, who perceives its remarkable suitability to its sphere. The fish of the sea might say, "How could I display the wisdom of God if I could sing or mount a tree like a bird!" but you know a fish in a tree would be a very grotesque affair, and there would be no wisdom of God to admire in fishes climbing trees; but when the fish cuts the wave with agile fin, all who have observed it say how wonderfully it is adapted to its habitat, how exactly its every bone is fitted to its mode of life. Brother, it is just so with you. If you begin to say, "I cannot glorify God where I am, and as I am," I answer, Neither could you anywhere if not where you are. Providence, which arranged your surroundings, appointed them so that, all things considered, you are in the position in which you can best display the wisdom and the grace of God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) Men make choice of a home without making any inquiry as to the religious state of the neighbourhood. They do not care how poor the church is if the farm be good. They will give up the most inspiring ministry in the world for ten feet more garden, or a paddock to feed an ass in. They will tell you that the house is roomy, the garden is large, the air is balmy, the district is genteel, and if

you ask them what religious teaching they will have there, they will tell you they really do not know, but must inquire! They will take away six children into a moral desert for the sake of a garden to play in; they will leave Paul or Apollos for six feet of greenhouse! Others, again, fix their tent where they can get the best food for the heart's life; and they sacrifice a summer house that they may now and again get a peep of heaven.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) The good man's Tent and Altar go together. You might summarise much of a good man's life in this brief sentence,—“He pitched his tent, and built an altar.” As the one was necessary for the body, so was the other necessary for his soul. There are, however, many tents now which are unaccompanied by an altar. Man is oftentimes more anxious about his tent than about his altar. Not so with the good man. His altar is his chief joy. He communes there with God. Across the altar he catches glimpses of heaven. Upon his altar angels drop blessings from their wings of light. When he is stained with guilt or weary with sorrow, he draweth nigh to his altar, and rises forgiven and strong. It is a poor life that has no altar. Nay, 'tis not a *life*, it is mere *existence*. The altar is the link which connects the human worshipper with the adoring seraphim. The whole of the reverent intelligences of the universe meet around the altar. All our Graces are strengthened and beautified by worship. Faith inhales new life, hope gains clearer vision, joy learns some new song to cheer the hours of pilgrimage and toil. If you take care of the altar, God will take care of the tent. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—*Ibid.*

AN EXEMPLARY INVITATION.

(Verses 29-32).

Let us consider :

I. The Journey.

“We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you.” It was—

1. *A journey to a glorious destiny.* Canaan was a goodly and a glorious land (Deut. viii. 7-9). To this land the Israelites were advancing. All men are journeying; but it is to be feared that many are travelling on a dreary road with a dreadful ending. Not so the Christian: he is travelling to the spiritual Canaan. Frequently Canaan

is regarded as a type of heaven; but it is rather a type of the spiritual privileges and high calling of the Christian. We are journeying to *perfection of character*. We go forward to the rest, not of outward security, but of inward harmony. We advance not to any material inheritance, but to the inheritance of spiritual perfection—to love, holiness, peace, joy, etc. This is the surest guarantee of heaven; this is heaven. (a)

2. *A journey to an assured destiny.* “The Lord said, I will give it you.”

God hath promised us the inheritance. True, there are many foes to be cast out before we can enter upon it; base lusts, evil passions, besetting sins, have to be conquered before we attain our high calling; but God hath assured us of victory. "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." "A glorious Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," etc. "Exceeding great and precious promises are given unto us; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." Perfection of character is perfect blessedness. Holiness, the heaven of the soul, is the gift of God, and is promised by Him to all who believe in His Son Jesus Christ. He cannot deny Himself; His word cannot pass away. "All the promises of God in Jesus Christ are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

II. The Invitation.

"And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us."

1. *The spirit of true religion is social and benevolent.* The child of God is not content to travel alone to the place which God promised to give him; but invites others to accompany him, saying, "Come thou with us." I cannot understand the piety of the man who possesses the grace of God himself, and believes that they who do not possess it will be lost, and yet makes no effort to save them. Such conduct is inconsistent, selfish, utterly unchristian. The true Christian knows that God has declared that He "will have all men to be saved;" and He longs, prays, and works for the salvation of others. Godliness enkindles in the soul the most kind and generous emotions. (b)

2. *The exercise of this spirit should be first directed to those who are most closely related to us.* Moses invited Hobab, his brother-in-law. Next to our own spiritual well-being we should seek that of our own kindred,—parents that of their children, the husband that of his wife, etc. The principle is clearly taught by our Lord and His Apostles

(see Mark v. 19; Luke viii. 38, 39; xxiv. 47; 1 Tim. v. 4). (c)

III. The Inducements.

Moses holds out to Hobab two inducements to accompany them,—

1. *The benefits he would receive.* "We will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. . . . And it shall be if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." We have here,—
(1) *An Assurance*—(a) *That they would do him good.* The Christian pilgrim can do good to his fellow-pilgrims by kindly companionship. Brotherly sympathy and fellowship are helpful. By presenting a good example we can also do good. How great is the influence of example! And, when it is good, how strong it is to correct the imperfect and the wrong! and to stimulate and strengthen to the doing of the right! By prayer also we can do good to our fellow-travellers. The prayers of a truly Christian man are perhaps the greatest boon that one man can confer upon another. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." (β) *That he should share in the goodness of God to them.* "What goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." And what great goodness the Lord had led them to expect He would do for them! He leads us to expect even higher and richer blessings. He promises to supply our needs. "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "No good thing will He withhold," etc. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need," etc. In our journey the manna will not fail, etc. He will guide and protect us. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." "God is our refuge and strength," etc. He will accompany and sustain us all the way. "My presence shall go with thee," etc. "Lo, I am with you always," etc. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" "My grace is sufficient for thee," etc.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." He leads us to expect *a glorious future*. He calls us to a higher standard of character than that to which the Israelites attained, and to a more glorious inheritance than theirs. They had only a very faint hope beyond Canaan and the present life; but we look for "an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled," etc. Wherefore, "Come thou with us," &c. We have here—

(2). *The ground of this assurance*. "For the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Our faith and hope rest in the sure promises of the faithful and unchangeable God. Are we not warranted then in saying as an inducement to others to join us, "We will do thee good"? (d)

2. *The benefits he would confer*. The hope of deriving benefit did not prevail with Hobab: he said unto Moses, "I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred." Then Moses tried to persuade him with this inducement, that his presence would be a benefit to them: "he said, Leave us not I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." Hobab appears to have been an "experienced Bedouin sheikh, to whom Moses looked for the safety of his cumbrous caravan in the

new and difficult ground before them. The tracks and passes of that 'waste howling wilderness' were all familiar to him, and his practised sight should be to them 'instead of eyes' in discerning the distant clumps of verdure which betokened the wells or springs for the daily encampment, and in giving timely warning of the approach of the Amalekites or other spoilers of the desert."

What a vast amount of good many who are outside the pale of the Church, yet not out of sympathy with the Christian religion, might do, if they would but "heartily come with us"! As wise counsellors in the business affairs of the Church; as visitors of the sick, the ignorant, and the spiritually destitute; as Sunday-school teachers, and in many other ways, they could render invaluable service to the cause of Jesus Christ among men. Apply this motive *to the young, to the undecided, to the almost persuaded*.

Conclusion:

With what company are you prosecuting your life-journey? To what destiny are you advancing? "Come with us, and we will do thee good;" &c. In our own name, in the name of the Church, and in the name of our gracious Lord, we heartily invite you, "Come with us," &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) *Man must go*. It is not a question of whether we will go or not go, that is determined for us—we *must* go. Every man is accomplishing a journey, going through a process. No man is standing still. The infant is going on towards youth; youth is advancing towards the stature and strength of manhood; and man, in the summer of his prosperity and honour, is going on towards the sere leaf, and towards a land of darkness as darkness itself. Men must go on, then. The only question is—*How?* Man may go either with God or without Him.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) These happy disciples were now united in conversion, and each one was made the instrument of blessing the other. Philip and Nathanael, Andrew, Peter, and John co-operated with Christ, and with the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a most delightful, simple, thorough, hearty work of Christian

love. Friends began with friends, relatives with relatives. Presently we see the circle enlarging, but here it is small and distinctly visible. Each rising wave is apparent, and we see how it spreads, each circling ripple on the lake of love, before there are so many of them, and so vast and deep and widening, that we can no more trace them but as one common impulse, one grand heaving and waving in the mighty sea. In this simple early life of Christianity, every infant missionary impulse of sympathy and love is visible, and can be counted. First come John, Andrew, and Peter, then Philip, then Nathanael; and then the wave that starts at Bethabara from the person of Christ, spreads all over Galilee and Judea, and then over the world. It is a missionary wave, and here is the very life of Christianity, the very essence of discipleship, and the very way of the world's evangelization. Nothing can be

more beautiful than the working of this principle of the socialism of grace, the social principle and power of Christianity. It is a sympathising, impulsive, progressive, diffusive life. It is the leaven of the world, which will work till the whole is leavened. And it works, where it works at all, with an accumulative, accelerating tendency and power.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

(c) In their first coming to Christ themselves, they brought others with them (John i. 40-46). It was a delightful example of the practical, social, sympathizing, working power and tendency of true piety, and of the direction and manner in which it works. . . .

Return to thine own house, and tell thy friends and relatives how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee. It seems there was no need of this command of Christ in the case of Andrew; his own heart led him in that very way, and it was a lovely development of character in him. No doubt he was thinking of his brother all the way to the dwelling of Jesus, and no sooner had he and John arrived with Christ, and entered the house, to abide with Him that day, than he thought within himself, I must go and find Peter first, and we will be here together.—*Ibid.*

(d) Where I am, there shall My servant be. They are great words, words of infinite weight of meaning, words of transcendent conceivable glory, words covering up an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. Where Christ is, there God is, and God's infinite love and happiness are revealed in Christ. Where Christ is, there heaven is, and the source and fountain of heaven's light and glory. Where Christ is, there all good things are, all the holy, loving beings of the universe, concentrated and circled in adoring ranks around Him, the visible Centre of their bliss, the Author of their holiness. Now of all this glory Christ says, in the midst of it, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and

am set down with My Father in His throne. He speaks also of His disciples and servants as partakers of His own joy; and the welcome of His servants is even this: Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! The joy of thy Lord! What a heaven of glory and blessedness is contained in that one expression! The joy of thy Lord! Who can measure its degree, who can conceive or fathom the infinite depth of its greatness, the infinite intensity of its bliss? And yet that is the joy that awaits every faithful follower and servant of the glorious Redeemer; the Redeemer's own joy, a thing no more to be measured or fathomed than the actual infinitude of God. They shall be with Him where He is, they shall behold His glory, they shall enter into His joy. For that joy, set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down for ever at the right hand of the throne of God. There the saints shall walk with Him in glory, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, received to the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are faithful unto death, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. . . .

Now let it be remembered that all this consummation is connected indissolubly with every thought and effort of the saint's life. Every victory that through Divine grace the Christian gains over sin and temptation, every labour done for Christ, every prayer of faith, every patient bearing of Christ's cross, is a pledge that the soul is advancing to that consummation in glory. Every co-operation of the children of God with Christ, is a pledge that Christ is working in them and with them, preparing them for this mighty revelation, when they are to shine out like the sun in the firmament, at His coming, His appearing, His kingdom. O, what an inducement to a life of holiness is here, what animating encouragement to every effort, and what infinite obligation for such effort laid upon the soul.—*Ibid.*

A GENEROUS PROPOSAL.

(Verse 29.)

"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

The people of Israel in the wilderness were a type of the Church of Christ. The invitation here given was such as may be given to those who are proper subjects for communion with the Christian Church.

I. What are the characteristics of a true church as it is pictured by Israel in the wilderness?

1. The people in the wilderness were

a redeemed people. They had been redeemed by blood and redeemed by power. All the true members of God's Church understand what the blood of sprinkling means. They have been redeemed by blood; and the Holy Spirit has entered into their hearts, and made them hate their former sins, has delivered them from the dominant power of their inward corruptions, has set them free and brought them out of the bondage of sin.

2. The Israelites were a people who were passing through a land wherein they found no rest, neither did they desire any, for they were journeying to another country, the promised land, the Canaan. Now, here is another description of the true Church of God. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. Here they have no continuing city.

3. Israel was a people walking by faith as to the future. "They were going to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." They had never seen it; no one had come from it to tell them of it (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). We walk by faith as Israel did of old.

4. These people, also, as to their present circumstances were walking by faith. Faith told them of the manna which fell day by day, and the water which flowed from the rock, which stream followed them in their journeyings. In this world the Christian man has to live by faith upon God as to present things. As to temporal necessities he must cast all his care on Him who careth for us: but especially as to all spiritual supplies the Christian has no stock of grace. He has no minor spring within himself in his old nature. He has to look for everything that can sustain his new life to God, even the Father, who hath promised not to forsake him.

5. These people found, wherever they went, that they were surrounded by foes. In the wilderness the Amalekites were against them. When they crossed into the Promised Land all the inhabitants of Canaan were up in arms against them. So, I think, will you find it if you are a child of God. You will have to fight continually. Till the last step you take it will be a conflict, and you will never be able to sheathe your sword until you are in the bosom of Christ.

II. It is the duty of the Christian Church to invite suitable persons to join with it.

1. As you read, "*Come thou with us,* and we will do thee good," say if these are not the terms in which any church

should invite a suitable pastor to unite with it. I have always felt that they have a better application to a pastor than they have to the people; for it is said of Hobab, "Thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." It was inviting a really efficient helper, who would be of great service to the Israelites, to come and cast in his lot with them. So should a church expect to find in its pastor one who may guide them, etc. Their invitation should come in this way, not only, "*Come thou with us, that we may get good out of thee*"—that is one design—but it should also be, "*Come with us, that we may do thee good, that we may hold up thy hands,*" etc.

2. The words are significant of the manner in which churches should invite suitable persons to come among them as private members. It is the duty of every child of God to be associated with the Christian Church, and surely it is part of our duty to instruct others to do what the Lord would approve of. Do not, therefore, hesitate to say to such as serve and fear the Lord, "How is it that you remain outside of the visible Church? Come thou with us," etc.

Let it be spoken *persuasively*. Use such reasoning as you can to prove that it is at once their duty and their privilege.

Do it heartily. Give a hearty, loving, warm invitation to those whom you believe to be your brethren and sisters in Christ.

Do it repeatedly, if once will not suffice. Hobab said he thought he would depart to his own land and his kindred, but Moses returned to the charge, and says, "Leave us not, I pray thee."

3. Let me call your attention to a certain sense in which Christian men may address this invitation to all that they meet with. "*Come thou with us,*" etc. Not "*come and join our church,*" etc. You cannot say that to any but to those in whom you see the fruits of the Spirit, but you may say, and you

ought to say, to all persons of all classes on all sides, "Come away from the seed of evil doers, cast in your lot with the people of God; leave the world," etc.

III. The main argument—the most powerful incentive we can ever use is—that association with the Church of Christ will do those who enter into it good.

1. The Church of God may say this, *because she can offer to those who join with her good company.* "We will do thee good," for we will introduce you to the goodly fellowship of the saints, to a section of the general assembly and Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven, and whose work of faith, patience of hope, and labours of love are so spread abroad throughout the world, even where their memory is forgot, that we need not to speak anything.

2. "Come thou with us," and you shall have *good instruction.* The teaching of the Church shall do thee good; thou shalt hear those glorious doctrines which shall build thee up in thy most holy faith.

3. "We will do the good" *in the best sense, for thou shalt feel in our midst the good presence of God* (see Matt. xviii. 20).

4. "Come with us," *for you shall participate in the good offices of the Church.* If there be *prayer* thou shalt have thy share in it. In the true Church of God there is *sympathy.* If there be anything to be found in *ordinances,* thou shalt have a share of that good thing. If *our fellowship be with Christ,* thou shalt have a share in it. We invite thee to a pure brotherly fellowship, etc.

5. But the good that Hobab was to

get *was not only on the road.* He must have got a good deal of good on the road, etc. You shall get good on the road. But *Hobab went into the Promised Land with God's people* (Judges. i. 16; iv. 11). So, the main blessing that you get from being united with the invisible Church of Christ is *reserved for the hereafter.*

IV. Let all of us who belong to Christ's Church take care to make this argument true.

How have you carried out this silent compact which has been made with the friends of Christ? "Come thou with us, and we," etc.

1. You say this to *the poor members of the Church.* Has God prospered you? If thou knowest a brother in Christ whose need is pressing, open thine hand wide unto him; do him good in this respect.

2. You old members of the Church have virtually promised to do good to *the young members;* will you not try to do so?

3. Some of your fellow Christians are *faint-hearted;* they always look on the black side, etc. Do them good (Isa. xxiv. 3, 4).

4. Some amongst your number will be *backsliders.* Watch over them (Gal. vi. 1).

5. Some in the Church may be *ignorant.* Hide his shortcomings and help his progress.

6. There may be some *who are in a good deal of trouble.* If you never owned him a friend before, be to him a friend now.

God grant us to be one with Christ, and to be one with His people, in time and in eternity.—C. H. Spurgeon.

"COME THOU WITH US, AND WE WILL DO THEE GOOD."

(Verse 29.)

"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

This passage expresses the essential spirit of Judaism. There are those in the Church who believe that God's express aim in Judaism was to keep the

Jewish people as separate from the world as possible; to keep them, like Noah, in an ark, while He plagued and punished the world at His will. But I

maintain, on the contrary, that Judaism was always genial to the stranger who would adopt its belief, and accept its blessings. From the evil which was in the world God was minded to keep the Jewish people free at any cost. From idolatry and its attendant pollutions He sought to deliver them, inasmuch as idolatry in the long run inevitably leads to national decline and death. To the stranger, the foreign person, or nation, who would dishonour its beliefs and trample on its blessings, Judaism was stern as Fate, and pitiless as Death. There was no weak pity for nations which had become so corrupt as to become inevitably corruptive, just as there is no weak pity in society for abandoned criminals now. How utterly, hopelessly, awfully profligate the Canaanitish nations were is narrated in Lev. xviii. 24-30. The Jews were simply God's executioners here, and the same doom, they are plainly warned, awaited them if they suffered themselves to be tempted into the same sins. . . . I am persuaded that the more carefully the spirit of the dispensation is studied, the more plainly will it appear that it is expressed in our text. From Moses to Zechariah, it is a cry to the nations, not to rot in their own corruption, "COME THOU WITH US, AND WE WILL DO YOU GOOD."

1. And this leads me to lay down this general principle—

God's privileges, the gifts which He bestows, and the advantages which He confers on some, are never intended to be exclusive.

God calls all, He calls you. The banquet is spread for all, it is spread for you. The message is pressed on all, it is pressed on you.

It is a condition of high privilege—of great, eminent, glorious joy and hope. But if any man say, "these privileges and hopes are mine, because I am happy enough to belong to a sealed number, to which poor sinners are not called, who are not privileged like me," he wrongs God, he wrongs God's great Love, in his thoughts. If God gives to one man advantages which

He denies to another, it is that the first may be His minister to bring that other to share in His joy. Unless a Church or a Christian be attracting men, ever saying to them by look, voice, manner, hand, "Come with us and we will do thee good," it is simply doing what the Jews did, causing the name of God to be blasphemed.

II. The invitation, "Come with us and we will do thee good."

1. *Come with us to the house of God.* I believe that God never gave to man a more blessed boon than the day of rest. But like all God's other gifts, just in proportion to its preciousness is it despised and profaned by those to whom its ministries are most important, and its benediction most large and complete. It is not a *law* of the Sabbath which you are breaking, but something which it is yet more terrible to sin against, God's loving and gracious counsel, in creating for you a day of rest, and guarding it as man cannot guard it by the most elaborate positive laws. I want you to feel how good the ordinance is, and to love it for its goodness, and to love the Lord who gave it, and who guards it by His Spirit in the Church.

Read Gen. ii. 1-3. From what did God rest? From activity? Surely not; but simply from creation; from what under human conditions is conceived of as the toil of production. Comp. John v. 16, 17. God rested; but His rest was the sustaining of the Creation, the upholding of the order, beauty, and fruitfulness of the world. And man is to rest in his measure like God—a rest of joyful, holy activity; the activity of that which is highest and most God-like in him; not the rest of a brute sleeping lazily before a fire. Man is a spirit, and man's spirit rests only in communing with God, and doing the Father's mission.

A God-fearing man, who gathers his household around him for prayer, and goes up with them to the house of God to worship and get fresh strength for the work of life, belongs at once to a higher class. Life means more to him and to his. Work means more, and

produces more. Higher faculties are in play within him, higher joys and ends are within his reach. . . .

Come with us to the house of God. Learn with us wherein the true rest of a man's spirit consists, what it is which lightens life's burdens, soothes its sorrows, sanctifies its discipline, and crowns its labours.

2. *Come with us to the word of truth.*

I will suppose that sickness has entered your home. There is a fair young child, the darling of your heart, the little thing whose voice always welcomed you home at night, whose prattle never failed to cheer you as she sat on your knee by your fireside at tea. Death has marked her. Day after day you come home, and miss the familiar welcome; you steal up to the bedside, and watch with an agony, whose measure none can guess at, the swift progress of the destroyer. At length the moment of the last struggle comes. One choking gasp—perhaps the word “Father,” “Mother,” seemed to form on her lips, and it is over. She lies there, fair as a lily, and as perishing; soon you have to bury her out of your sight. Tell me, will it hurt you then to open your Bible and read there that the glorious King of Heaven, the King who reigns in the world into which your darling has passed—said once when a man upon earth, “Suffer little children to come unto Me,” etc.? Would it be a dark thought, that He who took them in His arms and blessed them, has there gathered your little lamb in His arms, and folded her in His bosom, with a tenderness which casts even yours into the shade?

Or, let us say you have fallen into trouble. All around you is dark, and the prospect darker still; will it hurt or help you to open your Bible, and read the words of a man whose case was still darker, and, to a human eye, more hopeless than yours (Psa. xlii. 7-11)? Or those words of the great Apostle on the meaning and end of the discipline we endure (Heb. xii. 3-11)? Or, it may be that the dear companion of your pilgrimage, the sharer of all

your joys and sorrows through long and faithful years, lies dead at length; and you must write “There I buried Rachel,” in your way-book of life, and go sadly, tearfully, through the rest of your journey alone. I think that if she died in faith, in the faith and hope of the Gospel, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, these words will come home to your spirit with a strange grandeur and power as you stand by her new-made grave (1 Cor. xv. 20-23, 50-58). Or when you yourself grow old and weary, and see the form of the angel of death advancing, will it depress and distress you to read, “The Lord is my shepherd,” etc. (Psa. xxiii.)? There is no condition, there are no circumstances, for which blessed words are not to be found in that Book—words such as no mere man could speak to you. Come with us to the word of truth.

3. *Come with us to the living Saviour.*

. . . One who can cure the disease of sin, renew the heart, reform the nature, kindle within the spirit the love of God, of truth, of purity, and inspire the hope of heavenly glory. For this the Lord came, wrestled, suffered, died, etc. (Heb. vii. 24, 25). Come with us to the living Saviour; come and listen to His message of mercy; come, stand before the cross on Calvary, look on Him, whom you, too, have pierced, and mourn, and hear for yourself the blessed words, “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

4. *Come with us to our Father's home on high.* The life struggle will soon be ended. It will soon seem but a slight matter to you how you struggled through. It is said of Paul's companions, “Some on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship . . . they all escaped safe to land.” It is a picture of the life-course of how many noble and faithful ones. . . . Oh! the rapture of the moments when the feet first feel the touch of that blissful shore! The peril, the darkness, the battle, the anguish behind us for ever; before us, etc.

Come with us to Him who is “The

Way." No man cometh unto the Father, or to His love, but by Him. Come with us to the Cross—no Cross, no Crown. Come with us to the battle—no battle, no victory. Come

with us to the school of discipline—no suffering, no glory. "Come with us and we will do you good," etc.—*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*

ON THE MARCH.

(Verses 33-36.)

The Israelites are departing from Sinai, and are marching on towards the Promised Land.

Consider :

I. The immense number on the march.

Moses speaks of them as "the many thousands of Israel." Margin, as in Heb. : "ten thousand thousands." In all there were about two-and-a-half millions of persons : an immense multitude to be marching through the desert. The greatness of the number of this pilgrim host illustrates the countless multitude of the redeemed of the Lord. Some men of small souls and narrow creeds have represented the number of the saved as comparatively small, an elect few only, and that of the lost as terribly large. Very different is the representation of the Sacred Scriptures. "God so loved the world," etc. Christ "died for all." "Many shall come from the east and west," etc. "In My Father's house are many mansions." "A great multitude, which no man could number," etc. (a)

II. The bitter opposers of the march.

The Israelites had powerful foes to encounter and vanquish before they could possess the Promised Land. Of these enemies Moses speaks in our text : "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered," etc.

1. *The enemies of this marching host are also the enemies of the God of the host.* Moses in his prayer says, "Thine enemies." When Saul persecuted the early Christian Church, our Lord appearing to him, demanded, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ? "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." The Church is confronted and opposed by enemies to-day,—the

devil and his angels ; the world which is led by him ; and the lusts and passions of our carnal nature, oppose our heavenward march. Conflict is a condition of progress. We must fight if we would advance. The Lord accounts our enemies as His ; combats them as His ; and aids us that we may successfully meet and battle with them.

2. *That the opposition of the enemies arises from deep-rooted aversion to God.* Moses speaks of them as "them that hate" God. The spirit of Satan and the spirit of the world is still hostile to God, and to His people also in proportion to their loyal devotedness to Him. "If the world hate you," said our Lord, "ye know that it hated me," etc. (John xvi. 18, 19). "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world." "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Mark the awful depravity which is involved in this. How unspeakably terrible to hate truth, righteousness, and love ! How much more terrible to hate Him who is infinite Truth and Righteousness, and Love ! to hate the Supremely Holy and Kind ! The Church of Christ is opposed now by enemies who are inveterate in their hatred to God, and to the people of God. (b)

III. The victorious Leader of the march.

1. *Their Leader was Divine.* "The Ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them." Keil and Del. : "Jehovah still did as He had already done on the way to Sinai (Exod. xiii. 21, 22) : He went before them in the pillar of cloud, according to His promise (Exod. xxxiii. 13, 14), on their journey from Sinai to Canaan ; with this simple difference,

however, that henceforth the cloud that embodied the presence of Jehovah was connected with the Ark of the covenant, as the visible throne of His gracious presence, which had been appointed by Jehovah Himself. To this end the Ark of the covenant was carried separately from the rest of the sacred things, in front of the whole army; so that the cloud which went before them floated above the Ark, leading the procession, and regulating its movements and the direction it took in such a manner that the permanent connection between the cloud and the sanctuary might be visibly manifested even during their march." The Lord Himself led them in all their journeyings. He is still the infallible and gracious Leader of His people.

2. *Their leader was victorious.* He had, as it were, but to arise and the enemies were scattered, and fled in dismay. The enemies of the Church are unable to stand before "the Captain of our salvation." When He leads us onward we march to certain victory. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (c)

3. *His lead was earnestly desired.* Moses prayed for it: "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered," &c. The prayer implies the consciousness of weakness and inability. Moses and the hosts of Israel were not sufficient of themselves to cope with their enemies. And as we look upon

our foes to-day we may adopt the language of Jehoshaphat: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

IV. The abiding Presence of God on the march.

"And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." On the march the Lord in the symbol of His Presence went before them, and when they encamped He abode with them. The presence of the Lord continued with them.

1. *The welfare of the Church of God depends upon His presence in their midst.* "Apart from Me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing."

2. *The continuous Presence of God is promised to His Church.* "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." (d)

3. *The continuous presence of God should be sought by the Church in earnest prayer.* The promise of His presence should prove a basis of confidence and an encouragement to prayer.

Conclusion:

1. *Let the enemies of the Lord submit themselves to Him.* "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry," etc.

2. *Let every member of the pilgrim-host seek to realize constantly the victorious and blessed Presence of the Lord.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When these words are set before us as descriptive of the heavenly state, it can hardly fail but that the first thing on which the mind shall fasten will be the expression—"a great multitude, which no man could number." It is so in regard of parallel sayings—"In My Father's house are many mansions;" and, "many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." "A great multitude"!—"many mansions"!—"many shall come"! But what are many in the Divine arithmetic? Doubtless, thousands, and tens of thousands—yea, an innumerable company. Many are the worlds scattered through immensity—who shall reckon them? Many are the leaves of the earth's forests—who shall compute them? Many are the

grains of sand on the sea shore—who shall count them up? Neither may we think to compass the multitude that St. John saw before the throne and before the Lamb. Indeed, he tells us this, when he adds, "which no man could number." But it is a comforting thing to be told that "a great multitude"—not great on a mere human estimate, but great on a Divine—shall press into the inheritance purchased by Christ's blood. Then, not only is heaven no narrow, no contracted spot; but, on the contrary, spacious enough for myriads upon myriads of happy beings. But these myriads upon myriads shall be there; the vast expanse shall not stand empty, but shall be occupied by a rejoicing and adequate assembly! It is a refreshing thing to look away for a moment from the strife and uncharitable-

ness of human systems and conclusions, each disposed to narrow heaven within its own pale and party, to behold a multitude such as no man could number, entering by the gate into the everlasting city. There is something unspeakably cheering in the contrast between the representation furnished in our text, and that derived from the exclusive systems of mis-called theology. If heaven were to be peopled according to the estimate of self-opiniated sects; if human judgments were to settle who shall be privileged to find place within its precincts; not "many," but few; it may be very few would constitute the celestial assembly. . . . I kindle at the thought of there being a great multitude in heaven. A great multitude! There is room for us! A great multitude! There will be no deficiency without us. We can be spared. The loss will be ours! but, O! what a loss!—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

(b) Our field of conflict is different from that on which men oppose each other. It comprises the whole unseen realm. All the secret roads, and paths, and avenues, in which spirits dwell, are filled with a great invisible host. These are our adversaries. And they are all the more dangerous because they are invisible. Subtle are they. We are unconscious of their presence. They come, they go; they assail, they retreat; they plan, they attack, they withdraw; they carry on all the processes by which they mean to suborn or destroy us, without the possibility of our seeing them. When, in physical warfare, the enemy that is over against us establishes the line of a new redoubt, we can see that; and when a new battery is discovered, a battery may be planted opposite to it; but no engineering can trace these invisible engineers or their work. And there is something very august in the thought that the most transcendent powers in the universe, that fill time and space, are removed from the ordinary sight and inspection of men.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) Just when the battle was about to turn with the Ironsides, and the Cavaliers were coming on with one of Rupert's hot charges, ready to break the line, and the brave old Ironsides were half inclined to turn, up came the General, old Noll, riding on his horse, and they passed the word along, "Tis he, boys! here he comes!" and every man grew into a giant at once; they stood like iron columns, like walls of granite, and the Cavaliers as they came on broke like waves against rocks, and dashed away, and were heard of no more. It was the presence of the man that fired each soldier. And so it is now with us. We believe in Jesus Christ. We know that He is with His Church. He was dead, but rose again. He has gone to heaven, but His Spirit is with us,—King of kings and Lord of lords is He. If He seems to sleep in the midst of our ship, yet He sleeps with His hand on the helm, and He will steer the vessel rightly; and now the love that we bear His

name steers our souls to holiness, to self-denial, to seek after God, to make full proof of the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, to seek to become like God, and to be absorbed into God that He may be all in all. This is what was wanted—a stimulus potent enough, under God's grace, to break through the barriers of sin.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Is the strife long and hard? Long and hard it would be, to be ever defeated. But Christ shall lighten it for thee. He will bear it in thee; He will bear thee over it, as He will bear thee over the molten surges of this burning world. Christ will go before thee. He saith unto thee, "Follow Me, and where I am, there shall thou be with Me." "Follow thou Me." "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "If Christ be for us, who shall be against us"? Safely mayest thou fight, who art secure of victory. And thou art safe, if thou fight for Christ, and with Christ. Only give not way. If defeated, be the humbler, and rise again; begin again, and pray to persevere. If thou succeed, give "thanks to Him who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And He will, by His Blood, intercede for thee; He will, by His grace, fight in thee; He will keep thee unto the end, who Himself crowneth, and is crowned, in all who are faithful to His grace.—*Dr. Fusey.*

(d) It is one of the fundamental things in godliness to know and realize the continual presence with us of the great Unseen Spirit. A thousand foes beleaguer my soul, and lie in wait, and assault it through the gates of sense. A thousand fears rise up in my path to terrify me, and a thousand smiling joys to seduce and allure me. But to be *as seeing Him who is invisible*—what a defence against fear! What a perennial, full-flowing spring of joy and strength and calmness and purity! How it sustains the soul in trouble, whether in the fierce, tumultuous storm-blast, or in the slow years of weary sorrow, creeping on with sluggish pace! There is a little garret-room—I recall what I have seen—with a single window looking out to the smoke and chimneys of a great city. The marks of poverty are abundant in its worn and scanty furniture. A few sickly flowers are in the window, testifying to the longing which never deserts even the most afflicted, to have but a glimpse of Nature's sweet face, or but the edge of her smile. There is a rough couch in the room, and a thin, pale, wasted woman lies upon it. For years she has scarcely risen from that bed. For years she has been subject to wasting pain. Her friends are seldom with her; they are poor, and cannot afford the luxury of constantly attending her. But her long trouble has not soured her. Her room is perhaps the happiest and lightest in the whole city. Go in upon her when you may, you find the same calm contentment, the same sweet, chastened look, the same quiet, all but celestial peace. Poor caged bird,

she sings to God as gladly as the lark at heaven-gates. If one could take down the words she utters, and the tone in which they are uttered—if one could tell the heavenly thoughts that are unspoken, and that give the celestial calmness to that marble brow, the

world might learn the blessed joy and power of a sense of God's constant nearness. "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand."—*James Culross, A.M., D.D.*

THE MARCH.

(Verse 35.)

I think I shall be warranted in using the text in three ways :

I. This has been the watchword of the Church of God in all ages.

The people of God in the wilderness were the picture of God's Church upon earth. We are strangers and foreigners upon earth; we are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were. Here we have no abiding city. "We seek a city that hath foundations," etc.

Albeit that they had no habitation except their tents, yet is it true of Israel in the wilderness that they always had an habitation. (Comp. *Psa. xc. 1.*) Wherever they were, God was their dwelling place. God's wings were always over them; He carried them all the days of old, and they did really rest and dwell in Him. This, too, is true of the entire Church; always wandering, yet never far from home; unhoused, yet always in palaces, etc.

In another point the people of God in the wilderness were the picture of the Church of Christ. Wherever they marched, when God went before them, they marched to victory. Even so hath it been with the Church of God in all ages; her march has been that of one who is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Her path is the pathway of a conqueror; her march has been a procession of triumph. Let me show how this war-cry has really been heard of God and has been fulfilled to all His people. . . . Shall not this be our song to-day? Let but God go forth with our armies; let Him but speak through our ministers; let Him but dwell in our elders; let Him but make the bodies of our Church members His temples, and His enemies must

be scattered, and they must consume away.

Quietly, for the edification of each Christian, let me remark that this prayer will suit your personal difficulties. Have you been in conflict lately? Can you not deliver yourself? Pray, "Rise up, *Lord*," etc. Do your doubts prevail? Has your faith suffered an eclipse? Say, "Rise up *Lord*." All that is wanted in the darkest night to clear it away is for the sun to rise. Are you serving God in some particular work where many are seeking to undo all that you can accomplish? Has the Lord commanded you to some special work, and do friends discourage and enemies abuse? This prayer may suit you, "*Rise up Lord*." His uprising is enough, etc.

II. We shall now take the text in its reference to Christ.

Scripture is the best expounder of Scripture. The diamond is not to be cut except with a diamond. The sixty-eighth Psalm informs us that the moving of the Ark, from the lower place to the city of David, was typical of the ascending of Christ into heaven. How dense must have been the gloom over the fearing hearts of the Church when they saw their King, their Head dragged away, and nailed ignominiously to the tree, and how dead must all their hopes have been when at last He bowed His head and gave up the ghost! Was it not the day of hell's triumph, the hour of earth's despair, the moment of heaven's defeat? No; it was the reverse of all this. That moment when Christ died, He gave the death-blow to all His enemies. If the Church had had faith, they might have come early on the dawn of the first day in the

week, and standing outside the tomb, they might have begun to sing, "Rise up, Lord," etc.

He rises, and in that moment *sin* dies. The resurrection of Christ was God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. "He rose again for our justification." Nor was sin alone that day scattered. Did not all the hosts of *hell* flee before Him? When He rose, blank despair sat on the face of every fiend. Where was that day the boast of *death*? Had Christ remained in the jaws of death, then had the redeemed remained the bond slaves of death too; but He

lives. Blessed are they that sleep, for they shall rise too.

Nor was this all. After Christ had thus risen you will remember that He rose again. He rose from the grave to earth—He next rose from earth to heaven. (Comp. *Psa. xxiv. 7-10.*) On, on He rides; having scattered for ever all His enemies; having put all things under His feet, and being crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords.

III. What message has this text for us, and how may we use it?

* * * * *

C. H. Spurgeon.

THE CHURCH AND ITS ENEMIES.

(Verses 35, 36.)

The Almighty is here represented under two very different characters; as a God of terror, and as a God of grace.

I. That the Church of God has had enemies in every age.

This is accounted for in three ways:

1. *The favours they received.* God has set His heart upon His people; He bestows much on them, and expects much from them. This creates envy. Joseph's brethren hated him because he was the favourite. This evil principle soon grows into opposition and mischief.

2. *The principles they professed.* They were the only true principles; they worshipped the only true God, and therefore their conduct condemned all other modes of worship—all idolatry, and those sins which the nations committed.

3. *The expectations which they cherished.* These were deemed vain. Are these to become universal conquerors? Come, let us rise up against them, and destroy them. And does not this bear a resemblance to the good in the present age? Have they not enemies? Are they not a chosen people? Are not their principles peculiar, and their expectations large? The Church not only has outward enemies, but she has civil discords, inward commotions, secret foes.

II. That the enemies of the Church are considered the enemies of God.

The Church is intimately connected with God's dealings in a providential and merciful way, for He is near to His people (*Deut. xxxii. 10*; *Isa. lxiii. 9*). He sustains tender and intimate relations to the Church, hence her foes become His.

III. That when God rises up to judgment the destruction of His enemies is easy, terrible, and complete.

The Divine Being is here spoken of as rising up to judgment; this is figurative language, but indicates peril and alarm. But let us consider the second part of the prayer.

1. *That when God is represented as proceeding to acts of justice, it intimates that He is departing from the ordinary course of His dispensations.* Judgment is His strange work. He is said to come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner.

2. *That the aggregate number of the Lord's people is by no means inconsiderable.* I have no sympathy with that spirit which would straiten the gate already straight. Some unduly limit the number of Israel: (1) Because the limits of their observation are contracted. (2) Because the people of

God are widely dispersed and scattered. (3) Because their own prejudices often un-Christianize those whom God designs we should encourage. (4) Because we do not know how many Christians are concealed in the grave.

IV. That the constant abode of God with His Church is an object of their supreme desire.

"Return, O Lord."

1. Let us learn from this passage the

condescension and grace of God in that He will dwell with us.

2. Let each of us inquire whether we are amongst the many thousands of Israel.

3. What comfort should this give to the Church amidst her many trials.

4. This subject affords to the enemies of the Church a motive for seeking reconciliation with God.—*George Clayton*. From "*The Homiletic Quarterly*."

CHAPTER XI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. "*And when the people complained*," etc. Margin: "the people were, as it were, complainers." *Speaker's Comm.*: "And the people were as those that complain of evil in the ears of the Lord."

Fire of Jehovah: "a fire sent by Jehovah, but not proceeding directly from Him, or bursting forth from the cloud, as in Lev. x. 2. Whether it was kindled through a flash of lightning, or in some other such way, cannot be more exactly determined."—*Keil and Del.*

And consumed in the uttermost parts of the camp. The words supplied by the translators of the A.V. are unnecessary. *Keil and Del.*: "And ate at the end of the camp." The fire did not proceed far into the camp.

Verse 3. *Taberah*, i.e., burning or place of burning. Not the name of a station; but the local name given to that part of the camp where the fire broke out. The station was called Kibroth-Hattaavah, because of the more dreadful judgment which the people incurred by their renewed murmurings.

Verse 4. *The mixt multitude*. Heb., *Hasaphsoph*, "a number of people gathered together from all quarters: rabble."—*Fuerst*. "The word resembles our 'riff-raff' and denotes a mob of people scraped together."—*Speaker's*

Comm. See Exod. xii. 38. "The words '*they wept again*' point back to the former complaints of the people respecting the absence of flesh in the desert of Sin (Exod. xvi. 2 sqq.), although there is nothing said about their weeping there. By the flesh which they missed, we are not to understand either the fish which they expressly mention in the following verse (as in Lev. xi. 11), or merely oxen, sheep, and goats; but the word *בָּשָׂר* signifies flesh generally, as being a better kind of food than the bread-like manna."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely*. Instead of "freely," *Keil and Del.* translate, "for nothing." Fish were so abundant in the Nile and neighbouring waters that they could be purchased at very low prices.

The cucumbers of Egypt are abundant and distinguished for softness and sweet flavour.

The melons: By the Hebrew word *abatichim*, we are probably to understand both melons and water-melons. They are largely cultivated in Egypt, and are sold so cheaply that they are used both by rich and poor, and much appreciated for their refreshing juice. The water-melon is said to "serve the Egyptians for meat, drink, and physic."

The leeks were from the earliest times a very favourite vegetable with the Egyptians, as both a nourishing and savoury food.

The onions from time immemorial have been a favourite article of food amongst the Egyptians. They flourish greatly in Egypt, are mild and pleasant in flavour, and are unsurpassed as to their quality.

Garlick, an important article of food amongst Egyptian workmen. "All these things were refreshing and pleasant, and were plentiful and cheap in Egypt.

Verse 6. *There is nought at all*, etc. "Heb., 'Nought at all have we except that our eyes are unto this manna;' i.e., 'Nought else have we to expect beside this manna.' Cf. on the phrase, 'to have the eyes towards,' Ps. xxv. 15."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 7-9. On the *manna* see Exod. xvi. The description of it seems to be inserted parenthetically in this place to show the unreasonableness of the people in murmuring because of it.

Verse 10. *Weep throughout their families*; the weeping prevailed amongst the entire people.

Every man in the door of his tent; the weeping was unconcealed and open.

Verse 17. *I will take of the spirit which is upon thee*. "Render rather *separate from the spirit*, etc.; i.e., they shall have their portion in the same Divine gift which thou hast."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 25. *The Lord came down in a cloud*; i.e., the cloud of the Divine presence, which soared on high above the Tabernacle, came down to the door of it. (Comp. chap. xii. 5; Exod. xxxiii. 9.)

They prophesied, does not mean that they foretold future events, but that inspired by the Holy Spirit, in an exalted state of mind, they poured forth the praise of God or declared His will.

And did not cease, is incorrect. It should be, *and did not add*; i.e., they prophesied at this time only. This sign was given as a proof that God had called them to assist Moses, and had given them authority in their office.

Verse 26. Eldad and Medad were enrolled amongst the seventy, but for some reason they remained in the camp, and did not come to the Tabernacle.

Verse 31. *A wind from the Lord*; i.e., an extraordinary wind, not the effect of a natural cause. The wind was from the south-east (Psa. lxxviii. 26).

Quails. The common quails. "The whole description answers to the well-known habits of these birds, and the Arabic name for them is even now *Salwa*. In the spring they migrate northwards from Africa, and flying low, especially when wearied, are taken or come to ground in immense multitudes."—*Alford*.

As it were two cubits high upon, etc. The lxx., the Vulgate, and Josephus, explain this as referring to the height at which the quails flew above the ground, in their exhausted condition from their long flight. Vulg.: *Volabant in aere duobus cubitibus altitudine super terram*. But that this interpretation is correct is very questionable: "for נָטַשׁ עַל הַמַּחֲנֶה does not mean

to cause to fly or spread out over the camp, but to throw over or upon the camp. The words cannot therefore be understood in any other way than in Psa. lxxviii. 27, 28, viz., that the wind threw them about over the camp, so that they fell upon the ground a day's journey on either side of it, and that in such numbers that they lay, of course not for the whole distance mentioned, but in places about the camp, as much as two cubits deep."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 32. *Ten homers*. The homer was ten ephahs. But there is considerable uncertainty as to the absolute capacity of these measures. *The Speaker's Comm.* says, "The homer must have been something above five-and-a-half bushels."

And they spread them all abroad, etc., for the purpose of drying them, as the Egyptians are said to dry both quails and fish (see Herod. ii. 77).

Verse 33. *The Lord smote the people*,

etc. "The plague with which God smote the people is to be regarded, as are miracles in many other cases, as a Divine interference enhancing a pre-existing cause. The surfeit in which the people indulged, of itself disposed them to sickness. God's wrath, visiting the gluttonous through their gluttony, aggravated natural consequences into a supernatural visitation."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 34. *Kibroth-Hattaavah*; i.e., the graves of lust, or graves of greediness. "From there being no change of spot mentioned between it and Taberah in verse 3, it is probably like the latter about three days' journey from Sinai (x. 33.); and from the sea being twice mentioned in the course of the narrative (verses 22, 31), a maritime proximity may perhaps be inferred. If the conjecture of Hudherra as a site for Hazeroth be adopted, then the 'graves of lust'

may be perhaps within a day's journey thence in the direction of Sinai, and would lie within fifteen miles of the Gulf of Akabah."—*Smith's Dict. of the Bible*.

Verse 35. *Hazeroth*. The word means simply the *enclosures*. But "topographically it is a *village*; generally a Bedouin village, such as are formed of tent-cloths, spread over stone walls."—*Stanley, S. and P.* Fuerst gives its meaning in this place as *hamlets*. The difficulty of identifying the locality is increased by the fact that the names of many places are compounded with *חֵצֵר*. Perhaps Hazeroth is identical with Hudherra, which lies about eighteen hours' distance from Sinai on the road to the Akabah (see *Stanley, S. and P.*, pp. 81, 82). Keil and Del. say concerning Kibroth-Hattaavah and Hazeroth: "The situation of these two places of encampment is altogether unknown."

TABERAH AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verses 1-3).

In this brief record of the sin of Israel and the judgment of God at Taberah, the following points claim consideration.

I. Man sinning against the goodness of God.

"And the people complained," etc. Or, "And the people were as those that complain of evil in the ears of the Lord." No particular ground or reason of complaint is mentioned by the historian. It is probable that they murmured because of the privations of the march through the wilderness. Or it may have been, as Matthew Henry suggests, "that those who complained did not all agree in the cause. Some perhaps complained that they were removed from Mount Sinai, where they had been at rest so long; others that they did not remove sooner; some complained of the weather, others of the ways; some perhaps thought three days journey was too long a march, others thought it not long

enough, because it did not bring them into Canaan." In so doing they sinned against the great goodness of God. He had emancipated them from a miserable bondage by marvellous and mighty deeds; He had given to them most excellent laws; He was graciously supplying their wants, guiding their movements and guarding their interests; and He had promised them a glorious land as their inheritance. Fervent thanksgiving should have engaged their hearts and voices, and not mean murmuring. Their complaining was a sin against the great kindness of the Lord. Base was their ingratitude. Amidst present inconveniences we are all too prone to overlook past and present mercies, and to complain as though we were receiving ill-treatment at the hands of the Lord. This is a great evil; it comprises ingratitude, unbelief, rebellion against God. (a)

II. God recognising the sin of man.

"And the Lord heard, and his anger was kindled," &c.

1. *He knew the sin.* They "complained in the ears of the Lord." "And the Lord heard." There is no voice of man that escapes His ear. Every cry of blasphemy, every murmur of unbelief, every mutter of rebellion against Him, every whisper of evil conspiracy, is distinctly audible to Him. Words and thoughts, deeds and purposes, are all known to Him.

2. *He was angry because of the sin.* "And His anger was kindled." To the Lord sin is the abominable thing which He hates. His anger burns like an intense and unquenchable fire against sin.

3. *He manifested His anger because of the sin.* "And the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed in the uttermost parts of the camp." Or, "So that fire of Jehovah burned against them, and ate at the end of the camp."

(1.) The manifestation of His anger was *unmistakeable*. In whatsoever way the fire was kindled, there was no doubt in the minds of the people as to its being an expression of the wrath of God because of their sin. Their appeal to Moses is evidence of this. God has not left us in any uncertainty as to His hatred of evil. The stern penalties which are annexed to transgression, and the clear testimony of history as to the connexion of sin with suffering, loss, and ruin, are conclusive on the matter.

(2.) The manifestation of his anger was *restrained*. The fire of Jehovah burnt only in "the end of the camp." In wrath He remembered mercy.

III. *Suffering men seeking the intercession of the good.*

"And the people cried unto Moses."

1. *This is very common.* It was common with the Israelites. "When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and enquired early after God." "Those that slight God's friends when they are in prosperity would be glad to make them their friends when they are in distress. 'Father Abraham, send Lazarus.'"

2. *This is sometimes very mean.* It

was so with the Israelites in the wilderness. They were painfully, terribly prone to the most shameful rebellion; and then when the consequences of their sin came upon them, like base slaves, they hastened to entreat Moses to intercede with God for them. Pharaoh is a notable example of this mean spirit and conduct (see Exod. viii. 8; ix. 27-35; x. 16, 17).

"When men in health against physicians rail They should consider that their nerves may fail;

Nay, when the world can nothing more produce,

The priest, the insulted priest, may have his use,"

Crabbe.

IV. *The intercession of the good resulting in blessing to men.*

"And when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched." See here—

1. *The great mercy of God.* "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy," etc. "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil."

2. *The great efficacy of prayer.* In answer to the prayer of Moses the fire of Jehovah was quenched. Comp. Jas. v. 16-18. Tennyson says beautifully—

"Prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world
And touches Him that made it," (b)

3. *The distinguishing power of a good man to benefit his race.* We may approach God in prayer on behalf of others. The power of intercession with God is the greatest power conferred on the good man; and by its exercise he may confer the richest blessings upon mankind. Comp. Gen. xviii, 23-33; Job viii. 20; Heb. vii. 25. (c)

V. *The employment of a transient judgment as a permanent warning.*

"And he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord burnt among them." The new name was a memorial of the sin and shame of the people, and of the judgment and mercy of the Lord; it has been a monitor to all succeeding ages, uttering its solemn warning against sin, and especially against the sin of un-

gratefully and unbelievably complain-
ing against the arrangements of God.
Comp. 1 Cor. x. 10, 11.

Let us heed the warning, and shun
the sin.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I think we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope,
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of you grey bank of sky, we might grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls. But since the
scope

Must widen early, is it well to droop
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous heart! be comforted,
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints?—At least it may be
said,

"Because the way is short, I thank Thee,
God,"

Elizabeth B. Browning.

As it frequently happens that many persons
in easy circumstances, or who have many com-
fortable things, are notwithstanding very dis-
contented; it would be well for some friend thus
to reason with them: "Have you ever com-
pared your situation with those who hardly
ever see the sun, but live confined in tin
mines, stone quarries, and coal-pits? Before
you think yourself miserable, walk through
the wards of an hospital; think of the galley
slave, and the day labourer; reflect upon
the condition of many large, poor families
who have continued distress or sickness.
Many are often witnesses to scenes even more
wretched than these, where to poverty, cold,
and nakedness, are added the languors of lin-
gering and loathsome diseases and the torments
of excruciating pain." Now let those who are
miserable among many mercies, return as it
were from these sad scenes to their closets,
gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God in
exempting them from so many *real* ills, which
so many labour under, and instead of spend-
ing their hours brooding over their own
imaginary evils, let them be continually cheer-
ful, happy, and thankful.—*Gleanings.*

(b) What has prayer done? According to
its history as given in this Book, it has con-
quered the elements, it has healed the diseased,
it has put armies to flight, it has restored life,
it has sent back the angel of death when he
has shown his face in the dwelling, it has

brought down angels, and it has changed the
hearts of men, even hearts the most stubborn.
Prayer! It does move the fingers which create,
and which have created, and doubtless still
creates. Prayer! It does move the hand, as is
often said, which moves the world.—*Samuel*
Martin.

(c) O priceless grace! if thou, O believer,
knowest how to ask by faith, thou mayest
hand out to thy brethren wealth more pre-
cious than the gold of Ophir; for intercession
is the key to the ivory palaces wherein are con-
tained the boundless treasures of God. Saints
in intercession reach a place where angels can-
not stand. Those holy beings rejoice over
penitent sinners, but we do not read of their
being admitted as suppliants for the saints.
Yet we, imperfect as we are, have this favour,
we are permitted to open our mouth before the
Lord for the sick and for the tried, for the
troubled and for the downcast, with the assu-
rance that whatsoever we shall ask in prayer
believing we shall receive.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Our power to help and bless each other is,
primarily and pre-eminently, *the power of*
prayer. We can aid each other by gifts of our
worldly goods; we can aid each other by words
of instruction, correction, and consolation; we
can help each other by the influence of good
example, and by services so numerous and
various that it is almost impossible to classify
and describe them; but above all these
ministrations is the intercession of a true
Christian. Prayer, brethren, directs and im-
pels to other services of love. Prayer secures
the efficiency and success of all other minis-
trations, while prayer is independent of time,
independent of place, independent of temporal
circumstances, independent of a man's bodily
condition, and independent of a man's worldly
estate. Prayer, too, appeals to the fountain of
good, and to the Father of mercies; and if
God be true (and let God be true, and every
man a liar) it fills the channel of blessing
sometimes even to overflowing. Let Christ-
ians say to each other, "Brother, whatever
you withhold from me, deny me not your prayers;
whatever you may give to me, crown all your
gifts by your prayers."—*Samuel Martin.*

THE SUPREMACY OF THE SENSES OVER THE SOUL

(Verses 4-6.)

This portion of the history of Israel
is clearly stated by Krummacher in a
passage given in the *Illustrations.* (a)

Four preliminary remarks are sug-
gested:

First: *There is in unrenewed human*

nature an amazing and saddening proneness to sin. The fire of Jehovah, which had burnt amongst them as a judgment because of former sin, was scarcely quenched when they broke out afresh into sin. Only a very little time previously they were in their distress crying to Moses for mercy, and now they are again crying in rebellion against God. "No sooner is one murmuring ended," says Babington, "but another begins. *Obsta principiis*, Stay beginnings, for then is sin weakest, and may best be snubbed and overcome. Let it enter in at the door, and get a little footing it will foil us, and we shall hardly get it out again. First will enter a bare cogitation, then a vehement imagination, after that a wicked delectation, and lastly a killing and damning consent, if God recover us not."

Second: *The cries for mercy which are made under the pressure of suffering are seldom followed by reformation of life.* While the fire was consuming them they cried earnestly to Moses; but as soon as the fire was extinguished they returned to the sins which kindled it. Vows begotten of pain are generally ignored in ease and health. (b)

Third: *We may be associated with the people of God without possessing a godly spirit.*

"The mixed multitude," with whom the lusting and murmuring commenced, were not Israelites, but had joined themselves to them when they left Egypt, probably from selfish motives. They were utterly destitute of the true Israelitish spirit. Membership in the visible Church of Christ, and union with His true and spiritual Church, are by no means identical. Mere outward profession is spiritually worthless: nay, it is a lying semblance. Religious profession is valuable only as it is joined with holiness of heart and life. Comp. Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 6-8; Gal. iii. 7, 9; Tit. i. 16.

Fourth: *Sin is terribly contagious.* The sin in this case began with the mixed multitude, but it speedily spread to the children of Israel. One evil character corrupts another. "Evil

communications corrupt good manners." "Observe," says Trapp, "the danger of ill company. To converse with the ungodly, and not to learn their manners, is marvellously rare and difficult. A man may pass through Ethiopia unchanged; but he cannot dwell there and not be discoloured." Wherefore, shun the society of the wicked. (c)

But it appears to us that the most conspicuous feature in this sad scene is *the Supremacy of the Senses over the Soul*. Let us glance at the characteristics of this supremacy which are here exhibited:

I. Unsatisfied Cravings.

"And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting." Margin, as in Heb., "lusted a lust." They were not satisfied with the provision which God had made for them. Where animal appetites are supreme, satisfaction is unattainable. Man will ever remain restless and unsatisfied until his animal appetites are controlled by spiritual principles. The senses must be governed by the soul, the lower nature by the higher, before man can find satisfaction and rest. While the senses are supreme in man they are never satisfied; soon as one lust is gratified, another grows clamorous for gratification. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled."

II. Humiliating effeminacy.

"And the children of Israel wept again."

Tears are of various kinds, and of these kinds many are beautiful and blessed.

"Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,

The mother singing; at her marriage bell
The bride weeps; and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot
That moisture on his cheeks. Commend
the grace,

Mourners who weep! Albeit, as some
have done,

To grope, tear-blinded, in a desert-place,
And touch but tombs—look up! These
tears will run

Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and
sun." Elizabeth B. Browning.

But who shall commend these tears of the children of Israel in the desert? Men and women generally weeping openly, because they could not obtain the particular kind of food which they desired! Weeping openly for cucumbers, melons, etc.! Pitiabie spectacle! Such tears will never clear the vision for either stars or sun. Tears are revealers of character. Here they surely indicate the most deplorable weakness and waywardness of soul. We have spoken of "men and women weeping." The expression is inaccurate; for this weeping host was composed of those who were men and women in body only, in soul they were pusillanimous children. A host of weeping weaklings and cowards! The supremacy of the senses in man is destructive of strength and heroism of spirit. Patience under privations, persistence in duty despite of difficulty, calm endurance of present suffering for the attainment of great good in the future—these are incompatible with the sovereignty of man's lower nature. Such sovereignty is destructive of the noblest attributes of manhood. (d)

III. Daring unbelief.

"And said, who shall give us flesh to eat?" Cowards in the face of any difficulty or privation, yet they have the hardihood wickedly to challenge the ability of God. Thus the poet Asaph describes their conduct, "They tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? can He provide flesh for His people?" Their unbelief was the more inexcusable, the more guilty, because of the illustrious displays of the power of God which they had witnessed; and not of His power only, but also of His goodness to them. The supremacy of the senses tends to close the eye of the soul to the great verities of the spiritual universe, destroys the power of the soul for grasping those verities, leads to the

conviction that the things which are apprehensible by the senses are the only real, trustworthy things. Carnality of mind tends directly first to the prostration and then to the destruction of the faith-faculty.

IV. Deplorable degradation.

"We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely," etc. Their degradation appears,—

1. *In what they remembered.* "The fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks," etc. To what a dreadful depth must human nature have fallen or sunk when its most vivid and treasured memories are of savoury dainties for the gratification of the palate! How inexpressibly mournful when to any one the meat is more than the life!

2. *In what they forgot.* The unspeakable degradation of their slavery in Egypt appears to be forgotten by them. The servitude at the brick-kilns, the severe oppressions of their cruel taskmasters, the intolerable insult and injury of slavery, are all lost sight of now that the gratification of their carnal appetite is denied them. Freedom seemed a poor thing in their eyes to be purchased at the cost of the denial of their senses. Alas, how sad is all this! But far more sad is it that this is a picture of what is widely prevalent in our own land and age. Education, books, music, religion, and even manhood, are regarded by immense numbers as utterly inferior to the animal pleasures of eating and drinking. The soul is engulfed in the stomach.

V. Decided Contempt of Divine Blessings.

"But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." Moses describes the nature, form, and taste of the manna, and the mode of its preparation, to show the unreasonableness of the people in despising it. The manna was (1) Wholesome for health; (2) Pleasant to the palate; (3) Abundant in quantity; and (4) Free of cost. "But the sweet bread of heaven wanted 'the sharp and sour, which are required to give a stimulating flavour to the food

of man, on account of his sinful, restless desires, and the incessant changes of his earthly life.' In this respect the manna resembled the spiritual food supplied by the Word of God, of which the sinful heart of man may also speedily become weary, and turn to the more piquant productions of the spirit of the world." When the senses are supreme, spiritual and divine things are rejected, while carnal and earthly things are

eagerly pursued and heartily cherished.

Conclusion :

"The mind of the flesh is death ; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace." Submit not to the rule of the senses and passions of your nature. Let your spirit be the sovereign of your fleshly nature, and let God be supreme in your spirit. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The people were now in a waste-howl-ling wilderness. Nothing presented itself in the way of food, but that which descended from heaven, which lasted only for a day, and they had water only by a miracle from the rock that followed them. The eye was tired of resting upon the horrible uniformity of the boundless waste around it, which produced only here and there a solitary thorn or brier. Not a trace of any previous traveller. No pleasing sound delighted the ear. No turtle-dove cooed its melancholy note, no lark soared warbling aloft, as if to point the way to the repenting mind. Nothing but an occasional howl was heard. Sometimes a solitary pelican sounded its harsh and grating note, or the roar of hungry lions and the growls of bloodthirsty tigers and hyenas struck the ear from a distance, and excited a feeling of horror. The Israelites had been accustomed to something very different. In the pleasant land of Goshen the case had been otherwise—fruitfulness and pleasing scenery, fields, gardens, and meadows, rivers, and pools, abounded everywhere. Unhappily, they began to draw comparisons, and by these, an evil or a good is either made greater or less. If a great good is compared with one still greater, it loses in our estimation ; and so it is with an evil. If we reflect that it might be much worse, it becomes more tolerable. But when the evil is compared with the opposite good, it becomes more grievous, even as black laid upon white appears still blacker. In hell, the rich glutton thought a drop of water a good blessing, who previously would not have esteemed the most costly wine as much. If the sight of the misery of Lazarus had contributed to increase his enjoyment when on earth, by comparing his own health and ease with it—so the sight of the glory he enjoyed in heaven must have increased his torment.

The children of Israel also drew a comparison. In the burning desert, they call to mind the cooling cucumbers, and the juicy, pleasant, and well-flavoured water-melons. The thought of these things, it must be confessed, may well make the mouth water whilst traversing the burning sand. The Egyptian fish came also unfortunately to mind, as well as the savoury

leeks, onions, and garlic. There they had them for nought—here nothing of the kind was to be had, even for its weight in gold.

Let us not be unjust towards them, but confess that the temptation was not a small one to flesh and blood. In one respect there was nothing sinful in the idea that they would gladly now have gathered up the melons which perhaps in Egypt they had trampled under foot, and have considered the fish as a dainty which there they disregarded. But this became sin to them, because they desired them in an inordinate, violent manner, and out of, nay, even in opposition to, the Divine order. What did they not lose sight of in doing so ? Was not Canaan promised them, where they should have these things in abundance ? Should they therefore refuse to wait a little longer, since in the course of a few days or weeks they might arrive there, seeing that they were travelling towards it, and had already accomplished more than half the distance—not considering that they were the people from whom was to come salvation, and out of whom a seed should rise up, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed—not considering that what they endured and were deprived of, would be to their own advantage, and that of the whole world—not reflecting that they were really not in want of any thing necessary. Did God, His guidance, His promise, and His will appear to them of so little value ; and melons, onions, and garlic all to them ? Was everything forgotten which had been done to them and for them ? How disgustingly does their gloomy, earthly and carnal-mindedness manifest itself ! They imagine themselves in extreme misery.

—*G. D. Krummacher.*

(b) How often do we find such whom God hath beleaguered with an affliction, or planted His battery against by a disease, whom He seemed to have marked out for death, make covenants and promises for a future reformation, and of putting away their sin ; whom yet, when He withdraws His terrors, and puts up His arrows, those ties do no more bind than the withes did Samson ; but they arise, and go out, and do as at other times. While their backs smart under the rod, and they sit on the

brink of the grave, their spirits stoop, their passions are broken, and the heat of them assuaged; their thoughts are humbled to sobriety. Then to be liberal of promises is an easy bounty; but when the storm is over, and they return to their former freedom and delight, in sensible converses, then are they restrained in performance, and rescind former engagements. The sighs of their sick bed, which they turned into penitent groans, are now vanished into air, and forgotten; the sad reflections on their former vanities, the serious recollection of their ways which they were reduced to, when the flesh sat uneasy upon them, and dwelt in sorrow, are now as little thought upon as the dolorous accents of their grief. When they are newly come out of the furnace, while the smell of fire is yet on them, they are scrupulous and tender. But it is as those who come out of a hot stove, that shrink from cold at first, but by degrees are brought to their former hardness of temper. If the *soul* be not changed, though there may for a while some *religious colour* appear in the man's face, he will at last return to his former habit. —*Spiritual Bee.*

(c) Sin is like the bale of goods which came from the east to this city in the olden time, which brought the pest in it. Probably it was but a small bale, but yet it contained in it the deaths of hundreds of the inhabitants of London. In those days one piece of rag carried the infection into a whole town. So, if you permit one sin or false doctrine in a church knowingly and wittingly, none can tell the extent to which that evil may ultimately go. The church, therefore, is to be purged of

practical and doctrinal evil as diligently as possible. That sour and corrupting thing which God abhors must be purged out, and it is to be the business of the Christian minister and of all his fellow-helps, to keep the church free from it.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) The most terrible scourges with which the east is afflicted in the way of disease are the fruits of gross living—eating as well as drinking—perhaps the first most. Men in those climates cannot bear it; students cannot in this. To keep a clear eye, a firm hand, a steady brain were more to Daniel than pleasures of the palate. I venture to say that no man has ever greatly distinguished himself whose body was not in firm control. It is not enough to follow nature and never be excessive; nature wants curbing, and unless young men take their bodies in hand, and compel them sometimes to abstain, and obey the mastery of the will, it is impossible to keep the body in due subjection, and make it the eager and rapid handmaid of the soul. Fasts are good things in youth, simply as a moral discipline; as a man training for a race abstains from all which might imperil his hope of a prize. The Romanists abuse them to superstitious ends, and the peril of doing so is great; therefore the Protestant churches, wisely, I think, leave them alone. But you *must* master the body; you *must* make its limbs to move to the music of temperance and chastity; and there are times when pulse and water will be the fittest nourishment, and leave the spirit free for aspiration, and the mind clear and strong for work.—J. Baldwin Brown.

PARTIAL MEMORIES.

(Verses 4-6.)

I. Observe what they ought to have remembered :

1. *What they had suffered.*
2. *What God had done for them.*
3. *What He then was doing.*
4. *What He had promised to do.*

II. Observe what they chiefly dwelt upon :

1. *Creature comforts, not spiritual deprivations.*

2. *Personal satisfaction, not national freedom.*

III. Observe the effects of this partial memory of the past :

1. *It led to discontent.*
2. *It resulted in Divine anger.*
3. *It prolonged their stay in the wilderness.*—*Biblical Museum.*

THE MANNA AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE SPIRITUAL
NEEDS OF MAN.

(Verses 7-9.)

The subject of the Manna has been treated at length in *The Hom. Comm.* on Exod. xvi.

This paragraph is introduced paren-

thetically to show the unreasonableness of the people in murmuring and speaking contemptuously of the Mamma. The historian speaks of it as being like

coriander seed. "The coriander seed is that of the *coriandrum sativum*, cultivated in England for confectionery, and wild in Egypt and Palestine. The seed is globular, grayish-coloured, and hollow, the surface marked with fine stripes. It has a pleasant spicy flavour."—*Alford*. The colour of the manna is said to be "as the colour of bdellium." בְּדֶלֶה, which is translated bdellium, has been variously interpreted. The theory of Bochart, which is adopted by Gesenius and seems to us the most probable, is that it signifies *pearls*, which are found in great abundance on the shores of the Persian Gulf. Fuerst also gives this as the meaning in this place—"pearl, with the shining of which the grains of manna were compared, Num. xi. 7."

But it is our purpose to regard the gift of the manna as an illustration of the Provision which God has made for the spiritual needs of our race in Jesus Christ. We have warrant for so regarding it in the Scriptures of the New Testament, John xi. 31-58; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. We discover the following points of analogy:

I. Both are of Divine Origin.

It questions to us utterly unreasonable to question the miraculous nature of the supply of manna. As Dr. Kitto remarks, "If any human infatuation could surprise a thoughtful and observant mind—and especially if any folly of those who deem themselves wiser than their Bible could astonish—it might excite strong wonder to see grave and reverend men set forth the strange proposition that two or three millions of people were fed from day to day, during forty years," with the gum of the tamarisk tree. "A very small quantity—and that only at a particular time of the year, which is not the time when the manna first fell—is now afforded by all the trees of the Sinai peninsula; and it would be safe to say, that if all the trees of this kind then or now growing in the world had been assembled in this part of Arabia Petrea, and had covered it wholly, they would

not have yielded a tithe of the quantity of gum required for the subsistence of so vast a multitude." (a)

And all spiritual provision for man's needs proceeds from God. The idea, the agencies, and the means of human salvation are all of Divine origin. All inspiring and strengthening influences are from above. "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life," etc. (b)

II. Both are unmerited Gifts.

Just before the first bestowal of the manna the people were guilty of the most grievous murmurings and rebellion against God (Exod. xvi. 1-12); they could not therefore advance the slightest pretence of meriting any good from Him. The blessings of Divine grace also are entirely owing to the free favour of our heavenly Father. Man merited nothing but pain and punishment from God. Rebels against His authority, we had forfeited all claim to His favour. "But God commendeth His love towards us," etc. (Rom. v. 8, 20). "For by grace are ye saved," etc. Eph. ii. 8; 1 John, iv. 9, 10. (c)

III. Both are wholesome.

The manna, which they despised, "was highly nutritive and wholesome food, as nearly as possible analogous to what forms the staff of life, be it rice or corn, to the present inhabitants of the desert, who rarely taste meat or vegetables, and are but too happy if they can get enough of their customary food." The provisions of Divine grace for our spiritual needs are compared in the Scriptures to those great essentials of life and health, bread and water. Comp. John iv. 13, 14; vi. 35, 50, 51. Spiritual life and health are unattainable save through the provisions of the Gospel. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul of man. His salvation is new life to the spiritually dead, health to the sin-sick soul, strength to the morally weak.

IV. Both are pleasant.

The manna was very agreeable to the palate. "Eaten as gathered, it tasted

like cakes made of meal and honey (Exod. xvi. 31); but when dressed, it acquired the taste of fresh oil, a flavour highly agreeable to the Israelites" (ver. 8). The provisions of Christianity are pleasant as well as wholesome. One of the favourite images of the prophets to set forth the blessings of the Gospel age is that of a great and bounteous festival (Cant. v. 1; Isa. xxv. 6; lxx. 13, 14). Our Lord also uses the same figure for the same purpose (Matt. xxii. 1-14; Luke xiv. 15-24). God in the Gospel provides a delightful feast of spiritual experiences, exercises, and services—a feast of peace, hope, love, joy, service, fellowship, worship.

V. Both are Abundant.

There was no scarcity of manna. For forty years the Lord caused it to fall with unfailing regularity, so that there was an omer (*i.e.* nearly three English quarts) for every person in the vast host every day. The supplies of Christianity are abundant. Like the air and the light, they are inexhaustible. They are like a river deep and broad, which is fed by perennial springs. "The unsearchable riches of Christ." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," etc.

VI. Both are Free.

All the Israelites might avail themselves of the manna; no restriction was placed upon them in this respect. Gloriously free are the blessings of

salvation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money," etc. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," etc. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (*d*)

VII. Both require personal Appropriation.

The Israelites were required to gather the manna in the early morning; they then prepared it for eating by grinding or pounding it, and baking it in cakes. The blessings of the Divine Gospel will profit us nothing unless we personally appropriate them. We must believe the Christ of the Gospel (John iii. 36; vi. 47-58); we must meditate upon the teachings of the Gospel; we must practise the precepts of the Gospel; we must live the Gospel, if we would enjoy the rich provisions which it contains for our spiritual needs. Without this personal appropriation we shall perish even in the midst of the banquet-house of Christ, and in presence of the choicest, most abundant, and freest provisions of the grace of the heavenly King. (*e*)

Conclusion :

1. *Take heed that ye despise not the spiritual provisions of the Divine grace.*
2. *Gratefully and gladly accept these provisions.* (*f*)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) The natural products of the Arabian deserts and other Oriental regions, which bear the name of manna, have not the qualities or uses ascribed to the manna of Scripture. They are all condiments or medicines rather than food, stimulating or purgative rather than nutritious; they are produced only three or four months in the year, from May to August, and not all the year round; they come only in small quantities, never affording anything like 15,000,000 of pounds a-week, which must have been requisite for the subsistence of the whole Israelitish camp, since each man had an omer (or three English quarts) a day, and that for forty years; they can be kept for a long time, and do not become useless in a day or two; they are just as liable to deteriorate on the Sabbath as on any other day; nor does a double quantity fall on the day preceding the

Sabbath; nor would natural products cease at once and for ever, as the manna is represented as ceasing in the book of Joshua. The manna of Scripture we therefore regard as wholly miraculous, and not in any respect a product of nature.—*C. E. Stowe, D.D.*

(*b*) If it would be marvellous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a thousand of them born at a birth! What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it? And yet the love of God is that fountain from which all the rivers of mercy which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head, and adore and magnify for ever and ever "God, even

our Father, who hath loved us."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The love which God has for us, did not, does not, spring from moral excellence in us; and still less does its depth and breadth answer to the loveableness of our dispositions. No man can ponder for a moment the facts in our case without being obliged to say that God loves man, not so much from the adaptation of human nature and disposition to produce love, as from a Divine nature that overflows from the necessity of its own richness and fulness. The reasons must needs be in God, and not in us.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) I walked over a long sandy road one day, when the weather was sultry, and the heat, far beyond our common experience in this country, was almost tropical; I saw a little stream of cool water, and being parched with thirst I stooped down and drank. Do you think I asked anybody's leave, or enquired whether I might drink or not? I did not know who it belonged to, and I did not care. There it was, and I felt if it was there it was enough for me. I was thirsty, and there was the water. I noticed after I had drank that there were two poor tramps came along, and they went down and drank too. I did not find anybody marching them off to prison. There was the stream. The stream being there, and the thirsty men being there, the supply was suited to their need, and they promptly partook of it. How strange it is that when God has provided the Gospel, and men want it, they should require somebody to call out to them, "Ho! ho! ho!" and then they will not come after all. Oh! if they were a little more thirsty, if they did but know their need more, if they were convinced more of their sin, then they would scarcely want an invitation, but the mere fact of a supply would be sufficient for them and they would come and drink, and satisfy the burning thirst within.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) What a wonderful deal is made of faith in God's Book! We are justified by faith and not by works. . . . There is nothing arbitrary in this. It is not an arbitrary appointment of God that man should be justified and receive all blessedness when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It arises from the nature of things. I should like to give you an illustration of this. There are many beautiful trees in yonder park; take one of them. Now, in order to grow and bring forth

fruit, the tree must have its roots in the earth, and its branches spread out to the air and the sun. It is no arbitrary appointment. It arises from the nature of the tree and earth. It cannot be otherwise. Would man be blessed? Then he must be united to Christ. He must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He must appropriate Christ. Now, in one respect I almost tire of saying, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Such words as, Come to Christ, and Come to Jesus have been used in such a poor, meaningless, parrot-like way that they have almost been spoiled. But there is deep meaning, brethren, in coming to Christ. It is the passing through a cloud of doubts, fears, sins, right up to Him, and not only as the poor woman did, taking hold of the hem of His garment, but taking hold on Him and saying, "Lord, I perish; do Thou save me." And mark: the moment I am united to Christ, the moment I am in Him, all good is possible to my nature. There is no limitation but the limitation of my powers. All the blessedness possible to man is mine the moment I am united to Him.—*Thomas Jones.*

(f) Come then quickly. All is in vain if you do not come. See, the Gospel feast is spread, and the springs of life are all open; and Jesus stands in view of all the world, and cries that all the world may hear, and names no man by name and yet names every man that lives, each and all being contained in His invitation when He says, "If ANY man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." "Any man." Why that is *you!* That is *you!* He waits for you. He has happiness for you; He has righteousness for you, and love untold for you, and life, life evermore, for you. And what have you for Him? What have you to give Him? Surely now, at length, a willing heart—surely now an open trusting hand. Have you not had enough of life without Him? Will you attempt the wilderness once more, and perhaps perish of thirst? Will you go again to hew out a broken cistern, or a cistern that will be broken some time or other, and, perhaps, one day be found dead by its side? Are you so in love with misery? Is the covenant with death so dear? Come, thirsty soul and drink. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'; and let him that heareth say, 'Come'; and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely."—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

THE BURDENS OF LEADERSHIP.

(Verses 10-15).

Sorely was Moses tried by the unbelief, the cowardice, the complainings, and the rebellions of the Israelites. Pre-eminent was he for patience and meekness, yet there were

times when the strain and burden of the perverse people that he was called to lead were too great for his endurance. Such a time was that with which we are now dealing. (a)

This impassioned appeal to God suggests—

I. That the position of Leader or Governor of men is a very trying one.

1. *Because of the responsible nature of the duties of leadership.* The guidance and direction of a large number of men, even under the most favourable circumstances, involve a great weight of responsibility. And the government of a large number of men, even when the governor is most able and the governed most reasonable, is a thing of enormous difficulty.

2. *Because of the interest which the true leader takes in his charge.* The true leader, like Moses, is so deeply interested in those over whom he is placed as to be afflicted in all their afflictions; their privations and sufferings sorely pain him; their meannesses and sins cause him to blush with shame, or to weep in penitence. A great interest involves, almost invariably, a great burden.

3. *Because of the intractableness of men.* It was this which made the burden of Moses so heavy and grievous to bear at this time. "Antoninus the Emperor said often, *Imperium oceanum esse malorum*, that to be a governor of others is to be plunged into an ocean of miseries. Pope Adrian caused to be engraven upon his own tomb, *Felix si non imperitasset*. Melancthon said, the three sorest labours of all were *Docentis, imperantis, parturientis*, the labours of ministers, magistrates, and of travelling women. . . . Crowns have their cares; high seats are uneasy; many a cumber attends honour. *Beatus ille qui procul negotiis*. —John Trapp.

II. The true leader of men must often be painfully conscious of his insufficiency.

Moses felt it at this time and cried to the Lord, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." The difficult demands of changing circumstances and situations, the perplexing problems which arise in questions of government, the

perverse dispositions and practices of men, these and other things at times, give rise to such demands upon the personal powers of leaders of men as to fill and almost prostrate them with a sense of their insufficiency. Christian ministers have felt this, and cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Kings have felt it, and exclaimed:— "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Statesmen have felt it, &c.

III. The ablest and holiest leaders of men sometimes fail under the burdens of their position.

Moses was unquestionably one of the most distinguished of men—distinguished for mental power, and for elevation, strength, and holiness of character; but that he erred at this time is very clearly manifest from his appeal to the Lord. He erred—

1. *In exaggerating the extent of his responsibility.* It appears that when the discontent of the people became deep and clamorous, God did not at once interpose, "but withdrew with His help, and let the whole storm of the infuriated people burst upon him." This accounts for the language of verses 11-15. But it was an exaggeration to say that "the burden of all this people" was cast upon him alone. The Lord was constantly assisting him both by direction and by all-sufficient help. When our anxieties and cares obtain the mastery of our faith and patience, they at once assume most exaggerated dimensions and gravity.

2. *In overlooking the history of God's dealings with them, and the promises which He had made to them.* For a time Moses seems to forget the glorious deeds of the high Hand and the outstretched Arm which had brought them forth out of Egypt, the marvellous and mighty works at the Red Sea, the miracles of the quails and the manna at Sin, and that of the water from the rock at Rephidim. He forgot the gracious and all-inclusive promise, "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." What Moses did, we are all more or less prone to do when

life's burdens press severely and its sorrows are most sore.

3. *In passionately appealing to God for deliverance or death.* "And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee out of hand," etc. "This is the language of the discontent of despair," says Keil and Del., "which differs from the murmuring of unbelief, in the fact that it is addressed to God, for the purpose of entreating help and deliverance from Him; whereas unbelief complains of the ways of God, but while complaining of its troubles, does not pray to the Lord its God. . . There was good ground for his complaint. The burden of the office laid upon the shoulders of Moses was really too heavy for one man; and even the discontent which broke out in the complaint was nothing more than an outpouring of zeal for the office assigned him by God, under the burden of which his strength would eventually break down, unless he received some support. He was not tired of the office, but would stake his life for it if God did not relieve him in

some way, as office and life were really one in him. Jehovah therefore relieved him in the distress of which he complained, without blaming the words of His servant, which bordered on despair." Still it appears to us that Moses was presumptuous in presenting to the Lord the alternative that He would either deliver him or kill him, and that he was impatient and passionate in his appeal to the Lord. But if even he failed under the heavy burden, how terribly complete and unutterably mournful would our failure have been had we been subjected to such a trial!

Conclusion:

1. *Great honours involve great obligations.*

2. *A man may fail even in the strongest point of his character.* Moses was pre-eminently meek, yet here he is petulant, etc. Therefore, "Watch thou in all things," etc.

3. *It is the duty of men not to increase, but if possible to lessen the difficulties and trials of leadership.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Up to the hour of his mysterious departure, he devoted himself to his people with an earnestness and an energy which no combination of words can express. For their sakes he gave up his own will, while in the fulfilling of the Infinite Will he made the most costly sacrifices, and suffered the severest penalties. His very first act on behalf of his oppressed nation was misunderstood and misinterpreted, and drove him into solitude and exile. Scarcely had the ambassador of Heaven, with the Divine credentials of his mission in his hands, left the presence of Pharaoh, where he had asserted the rights of his people to spiritual freedom and privilege, than they assailed him with the most bitter invective, and accused him of aggravating the evils under which they were doomed to suffer. Only a few hours had run their round since he had finished those stupendous deeds of might and mercy, which had resulted in setting them free—he had but just sundered the link of the chain which chafed and fettered their inmost soul, when the mere sight of the Egyptians following them in their flight, led them to chide their illustrious leader by charging him with subjecting them to a worse calamity than bondage, and to protest even that they would rather have found a grave in Egypt than fall

into the hand of the enemy; and this in direct opposition to the assurance given them from on high, that their deliverance was part of the plan and purpose of Him who is of one mind, and to whose powers and resources there is no limit. No sooner had they passed through the Red Sea, whose waters they had seen to part and stand as a wall of adamant on either hand, in whose depth they had beheld the horse and the rider sink as a stone to the bottom, and on whose hither bank they had given voice and volume to their joy in a song of triumph and gratitude, than they murmured and repined, because the water which was offered to them in their thirst was neither so sweet nor so living as the current of the Nile, or as Goshen's springs and streams. Scarcely had the bitter been extracted from the waters of Marah; scarcely had they amid the solitude and the scantiness of the desert found themselves free to enjoy their rest and quiet—their recreation and refreshment—when their thoughts went back to Egypt, and their soul lusted after its provisions. Hence on reaching the wilderness of Sin, which lay between Elim and Sinai, and finding that they could not indulge their sensuous appetites as they did before their emancipation, they lost sight for the moment of

the higher good involved in their deliverance, and charged Moses with the fixed design of bringing them into the wilderness to compass their death by hunger. How crushing to his big and generous heart must have been their complaint—"Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full"! Was it their dream that life is made up of bodily ease and fleshly indulgence? Had they no faith in the matchless Power which had so often travelled forth on their behalf, and whose mighty deeds had all been in their favour? Or were they resolved to break the heart of the Man who, in the spirit of the most self-denying love and devotedness, was prepared to give up all that he had—not excepting life itself—for their wider freedom and higher good? — *Robert Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) If Moses is ever to be held as one of the greatest men of olden times, and of all times, then it must be confessed that no man ever paid a heavier penalty for his greatness. Never did human being stand so completely solitary and alone; never were motives and actions so misconstrued or misunderstood; never were noble and generous deeds so requited; never were charges and criminations so unfounded; never were labour and suffering so depreciated; never was heart so afflicted, or life so embittered, or death so isolated; and all this in the prosecution of an object which involved a nation's freedom and a world's weal. Though his soul was filled with one of Heaven's sublimest purposes, his heart was all but broken by the ingratitude and rebellion—the selfishness and the sensuousness of those whose cause he had made his own. So continued was the crucifixion of thought and feeling to which he was subject—such was the total immolation of self to which he was called, that his life was more than a martyr's death. His mental anguish threw all physical suffering into the distance, and the outward privation was as nothing in comparison with the inward affliction. But under the crushing pressure of all that was laid upon him, he still stood erect—manly in his attitude and heroic in his mien.—*Ibid.*

It is a gallant thing to fight with the free and the brave in defence of our country, our shrines, our hearthstones, and our fathers' sepulchres—action animates and prevents the spirit drooping; companions in arms, though they be few, invite us on: we fling fear, doubt, irresolution to the winds—and death is indifferent to us, for we know that glory decks

the hero's bier if it does not bind his brow. But to bear witness!—

To bear witness! what a world of meaning is hidden in these few words: how many of the grandest elements of human nature it requires to mould a character like this. Every man values the honest hearty good word of his neighbours; and there are associations gathered round the heart of each of us which it is impossible to efface. To be estranged from those we have lived with and loved from infancy—to pass from under the shadow of the faith that has fostered us—to look upon old sights, old haunts, familiar scenes, and find they are but fiends to mock us with a memory of what once was—to see contempt and scorn assume the place where love was wont to reign—to know that the affections we prized more than life are changed to wormwood—to watch our tried and trusted friends deliberately range themselves in the foemen's ranks—to have the harrowing conviction burned in upon the soul that we must go on now alone—go along the path we have chosen, and forego all the pleasures on which we counted to render existence endurable—these, these things try the temper and the tone of spirit—these constitute a frightful and a fiery ordeal at which human nature shudders. And yet all this must frequently be undergone for the cause of truth. The alternative is a terrible one and many waver; but such have not the elements of real greatness in them, the qualities which constitute one who must bear witness. The world has its laws and customs, its usages and ordinances, and woe to the man who sets himself in opposition to these. The world has its idols, its creed, its rule of faith—woe to the man who rises and declares its worship blasphemy—its creed a falsehood—its rule of faith a damnable delusion. Woe! truly; but unutterable woe would it be if these men did not rise up ever and anon, to smite the lazy blood into the cheeks of humanity; to exorcise the demon that directs the rabid multitude; to breathe a holier feeling through a land defaced by blood and crime. They are the pioneers of freedom, the vanguard of the hosts of truth. And their fate is to be reviled and ridiculed—blasphemed and buffeted—tortured body and soul with all the ingenuity of cruelty. Well, so it is, and so it will be; they have counted the cost; their death-smile is the calm of conquest; and—

"They flee far

To a sunnier strand;

And follow Love's folding star

To the evening land."—*J. W. Lester, D.D.*

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE GOOD IN THE PATH OF DUTY.

(Verse 11.)

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant?"

Keil and Del. translate, "Why hast Thou done evil to Thy servant?"

We propose to look at *the afflictions of godly men in the path of duty*—

I. As a Fact.

1. *Good men suffer afflictions.* Our text is the utterance of a distinguished servant of the Most High. "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds;" he was a man of extraordinary abilities, and of extraordinary excellence—wise, meek, courageous, prayerful, self-denying, &c. One would have thought that such a man would have been unmolested by suffering, and free from affliction. But our thinking would have been erroneous; for out of sharp suffering Moses is here appealing to God. God's servants suffer. Job, David, Asaph, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, the Sisters of Bethany, the Apostles of Jesus Christ, were all sufferers; some of them very severe sufferers. The Lord Christ, the Supreme Servant of God, was the Supreme Sufferer.

2. *Good men suffer afflictions in the path of duty.* It does not seem strange when the storm pursues and overtakes a disobedient prophet trying to escape from duty (Jonah i.); but it does seem strange that it should overtake the disciples of our Lord while they are engaged in carrying out His commands (Mark iv. 35-39). So the afflictions of Moses arose in the fulfilment of the duty which God had appointed him. The same is true of Jeremiah, John the Baptist, the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and a great host of others in subsequent times. It is pre-eminently true of our Divine Lord. It is true of very many in our own age.

II. As a Problem.

"Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant?" This inquiry implies—

1. *A difficulty.* Moses could not understand why the Lord had called him to a task, involving so much annoyance and pain. He is the servant of the Lord, engaged in the work of the Lord, and that a most arduous work; yet he is crossed, opposed, reviled, and the affliction is allowed by God, unrelieved by God, indeed, for a time God

appears not to heed either his sorely tried servant, or the rebellious and provoking people, over whom He had placed him. The painful obstructions which impede the course of the good, and the heavy burdens which oppress them, and the bitter enemies which assail them, and which are allowed by God, even while they tread the path of duty, are a source of sore perplexity to their mind and sharp pain to their heart. It is supremely difficult, in the time of trial, to discover how these things can be under the rule of a wise and kind and holy Being.

2. *Faith in the power of God to remove the difficulty.* "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant?" "Why hast Thou done evil to Thy servant?" Clearly Moses believed that there were sufficient reasons for the sore trials which he met with while fulfilling his vocation; that these reasons were known unto the Lord; and that the revelation of them would relieve his perplexed brain and his troubled heart. When the tried servants of God appeal to Him as Moses did, we may regard their appeals as expressions of faith in Him, and as precursors of relief and rest from Him.

III. Offer some Hints towards the Solution of the Problem.

The afflictions of the good in the path of duty, under the blessing of God, tend—

1. *To test their faith.* "Character," says Dr. Huntington, "depends on inward strength. But this strength has two conditions: it is increased only by being put forth, and it is tested only by some resistance. So, if the spiritual force, or character, in you is to be strong, it must be measured against some competition. It must enter into conflict with an antagonist. It must stand in comparison with something formidable enough to be a standard of its power . . . Suffering, then, in some of its forms, must be introduced, the appointed minister, the great assayist, to put the genuineness of faith to the proof, and purify it of its dross." (a)

2. *To promote their perfection.* "As

the Perfect One reached His perfectness through suffering," says Dr. Ferguson, "so it was with His servant. It was through the fire and the flame that the law of separation and refinement acted on the whole nature, and gave to it higher worth and glory. Trial ripened his manly spirit, and made it patient to endure.

'Useless and badly-tempered is the steel
If it refuse to bend; but the goodly blade—
The true Toledo—circleth on itself
Uninjured.'

He had learned to suffer as well as to do; and but for suffering, and his character, could never have reached that matchless height and perfection which belong to it." Comp. Acts xiv. 22; Rom. v. 3-5; James i. 2-4, 12. (b)

3. *To enhance their joy hereafter.* Comp. Matt. v. 10-12; Rom. viii. 17, 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. (c)

4. *To promote the good of the race.*

In fulfilling the Divine calling, which caused him so much trial and suffering, Moses carried forward the purposes of God, and conferred unspeakable benefits on our race. By the travail and sorrow of the good, God is saving humanity from its sins and miseries. The Christian is called to "know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings;" to suffer vicariously with Him, that others may be benefited and blessed. In the privilege of this high fellowship, the sharpest sufferings become sacred and exalting services. (d)

Conclusion :

1. *Severe afflictions in the path of duty are in full accord with the character of God.*

2. *Such sufferings are quite compatible with the favour of God towards us.* Comp. Heb. xii. 5-11.

3. *When severe suffering leads to sore perplexity, let us seek help of God.* Comp. Psa. lxxiii. 16, 17.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Some time ago I heard a party of friends singing the same piece of music. For a while their voices blended very sweetly, and I, not being able to offer a scientific criticism upon the performance, thought that they were all about equal. But presently they came to a passage of very high notes, very lofty music: and in that moment they all ceased but one, and that one voice went aloft alone, and thrilled me by the perfectness of its ease! If they had stopped before that, I should have said, "I give you common applause; one is as good as another, and I thank you all." But there was a time of trial, and in that time of trial the masterly voice rose where other voices could not follow it. It is so in the greater concerns and trials of life. For days together we seem to be tolerably equal, but there come special hours, critical trials, and in those moments—which are condensed lifetimes—we show the stuff we are made of and the capacity we represent. It is then that the religious man—if deeply and truly intelligent and earnest—shows himself a man.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) Tribulations are treasures; and if we were wise, we should reckon our afflictions among our rarest jewels. The caverns of sorrow are mines of diamonds. Our earthly possessions may be silver, but temporal trials are, to the saints, invariably gold. We may grow in grace through what we enjoy, but we probably make the greatest progress through what we suffer. Soft gales may be pleasant

for heaven-bound vessels, but rough winds are better. The calm is our way, but God hath His way in the whirlwind, and He rides on the wings of the wind. Saints gain more by their losses than by their profits. Health cometh out of their sicknesses, and wealth floweth out of their poverties.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The contrast between suffering on earth and its fruits in heaven, is wonderful. They ought to be kept constantly together, so that the darkness of the one shall be interpreted by the light of the other; that we shall not feel that sorrows have ended their course when aching ceases; that we shall not for a moment be left to believe that all the fruit of suffering is that which we pluck hitherward. We should know that sufferings produce their final results only after we are disembodied, and stand on the heavenly plain in the glorious fellowship of the redeemed. Then it will be made known to us that these and all of them came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, by the maintenance of their faith, by their endeavours to live according to God's commandments, by undergoing pain, and self-denial, and hardness as good soldiers; by accepting providential afflictions, by cleansing their dispositions and purifying their hearts, by suffering death itself. The marvellous economy of earthly suffering, rightly understood, is an economy of cleansing and beautifying. It is a lustration, and is preliminary to a state of glorification.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) We see no good done in this world that somebody does not suffer. There can be no education of children without there is somebody to suffer for them. A child with no mother or with no nurse, the mother having been taken away, or worse yet, with a mother or nurse that is heartless and inhuman, grows up so much less than a human being as it lacks the training which its helplessness demands. And if a child is sweet, and pure, and aspiring, and noble, somebody must have practised self-denial, or suffered for it; somebody must have agonised to save the child from agony; somebody's conscience must have been crucified that the child's conscience might be saved from the thorn. And wretched is the child

that has had nobody to suffer for it, to think for it, to feel for it, to live for it—for substituted life is the law of the development of life. My soul is the yeast of my children's souls; and I mix my being into theirs, and theirs are raised and brought to vitality by it. And if there is to be a Bible that is true to life, there must be somewhere in that Bible a recognition of the Christian principle of vicarious suffering, the suffering of one for another. For it is in nature, it is in the household, it is in the Church, and it is in the whole realm of benevolence outside of the Church. And when we find the Bible teaching it, everybody says, "It ought to teach it, it is but the echo of fact."—*Ibid.*

THE ANSWER OF GOD TO THE APPEALS OF MEN.

(Verses 16-20.)

In these verses we have—

I. The Lord's Answer to the Appeal of his much-trying Servant.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men," &c. (verses 16, 17). The Lord here arranges to lighten the burden of which Moses had complained as too heavy for him, by appointing seventy elders who should bear the burden of the people with him. Notice—

1. *The number of these assistants.* "Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel." The number seventy probably has a backward reference to the number of persons that went down into Egypt (Gen. xli. 26, 27). The same number of elders were called to accompany Moses to Mount Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 1); but their calling seems to have been for that one occasion only, while these were called to permanent service. This number was continued in the Sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews. And our Lord probably had reference to it when He appointed seventy disciples, and sent them forth as assistants to the apostles. But the point for us to seize concerning this number is, that it would afford adequate relief to Moses; the answer of the Lord to his appeal was sufficient and satisfactory.

2. *The selection of these assistants.* "And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of

Israel, whom thou knowest to be," &c. The choice of the seventy was assigned to Moses. The people being so unstable and wayward were not fit to be entrusted with the choice. Moses was to select persons who were elders not merely in respect of years, but also in ability and character, and influence with the people for good. If Moses made the selection himself, he would have no ground for complaint afterwards.

3. *The qualification imparted to these assistants.* "And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee," &c. This does not imply any diminution of the Divine grace and power to Moses. Unto them was to be granted a measure of the spirit which had been given in such great fulness to him; truth, wisdom, courage, piety, power, were to be bestowed upon them to fit them for their duties and responsibilities. "We do not find that Moses was less fit for government than he was before: rather his gifts were derived to others, as one candle lighteth another, and yet the light is not diminished." God never calls any one to the discharge of any duty without granting him ability for the same. When we are clear as to the Divine call we may be confident as to the Divine qualification.

Such was God's gracious answer to the appeal of Moses. That appeal was

somewhat imperfect and faulty; it was impetuous, and, to a certain extent, expressive of discontent and passion; but it was the utterance of a true and noble spirit, of one whose zeal in the work assigned him by God was most ardent, and who was sublimely forgetful of self in his solicitude for the glory of God. So the Lord answers him by granting him relief.

II. The Lord's Answer to the Appeal of His Perverse People.

"And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow," &c. This answer—

1. *Recognises the sinful character of their appeal.* "Ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying," &c. "Tears, of what sort soever, have a voice in them (Psa. xxxix. 12), as blood hath (Gen. iv. 10)." Their sin is manifest (1) In the lowness of their supreme desire. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" Their highest and most eager longing was for the gratification of their animal appetites. (2) In their depreciation of the Divine blessings. "It was well with us in Egypt . . . Why came we forth out of Egypt?" Their emancipation from slavery with its cruelty and unutterable degradation, the provisions with which they were so bounteously supplied, the glorious inheritance which was promised to them, these things they disparaged as unworthy of comparison with the dainties of Egypt which they had sacrificed. They preferred cucumbers to freedom, &c. (3) In their contempt of the Divine Presence. "Ye have despised the Lord which is among you." The unbelief expressed in the enquiry, "Who will give us flesh to eat?" was a despising of the Lord. It was a questioning, if not a denial, of His power, and that after the extraordinary displays of His power which they had witnessed. God marks the feelings which find utterance in our cries to Him, or to His servants.

2. *Demands preparation for the granting of their appeal.* "Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall

eat flesh." Keil and Del. explain "sanctify yourselves:" "to prepare themselves by purifications for the revelation of the glory of God in the miraculous gift of flesh." The interpretation of Fuerst is in substantial agreement with this. They had sinned grievously against God; and now they must prepare themselves by ablutions and by humbling of themselves, for the extraordinary manifestation of the Divine power.

3. *Promises the most abundant bestowment of that which they had so passionately and sinfully desired.* "The Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a month of days," &c. Inordinately they had craved flesh; generally and openly they had wept for it; and God determines to bestow it upon them in super-abundance. Their clamorous demand shall be granted; and the granting of it shall be their punishment. "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." No punishment can be more terrible than to grant the desires of a soul in which carnal appetites are supreme. Let our desires be subject in all things to the wise and gracious will of God. (a)

Conclusion. Mark well—

1. *The disgusting nature of the sins of gluttony and drunkenness.*

2. *The necessity of firmly controlling carnal desires.* Even those animal appetites which are lawful must be kept subordinate to higher things.

3. *The necessity of submissiveness in prayer.*

"We, ignorant of ourselves
Beg often our own harms, which the wise
powers,
Deny us for our good; so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers."—*Shakespeare.*

Let us pray in the spirit of Him who in His most intense agony said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Mr. Edmund Calamy relates, in his *Life*, that some persons of the name of Mart, in whose family he resided for some time, had a son who discovered the most wicked and impious disposition. When confined in prison, he wrote letters professing penitence; but as soon as he had an opportunity he returned to his former sins.

This young man had been the darling of both his father and mother; and the latter had set her affections upon him to so great a degree that when she saw him a monster of wickedness, she became deranged, and attempted to destroy herself, which she at length effected. So far from being suitably impressed with this awful event, her son now proceeded to greater lengths in wickedness. At length he professed to be sorry for his depraved course, and applied to the Rev. Samuel Pomfret to intercede for him with his father. He was made ready for sea, but, unhappily, became connected with a gang of villains, and, on the very night before he was to set sail, he robbed Mr. Pomfret, was pursued, tried, and condemned to die.

On the Sabbath preceding the Wednesday on which he was condemned to die, his father entreated Dr. Calamy to accompany him that evening to his cell in Newgate, to converse with his unhappy son, and to give his opinion as to the propriety of seeking to obtain his pardon. The doctor went, and found him in a very awful state of mind, resenting different things which he conceived his father had done wrong, and saying that he might obtain a pardon for him, if he would but part with some of his money. In vain did the doctor expostulate with him on the improper feelings he manifested, and entreat him to humble himself before God on account of his sins, as the only way of engaging his friends to obtain for him a reprieve. His reply was, "Sir, I scorn anything of that nature; and would rather die with my company." The doctor reasoned with him on the existence of a hereafter, charged him with the death of his mother, taxed him with the murder of some persons abroad, whose blood he had actually shed, and showed him the heavy punishment he must endure in an eternal world, unless he turned to God, repented of his sins, and prayed for pardon through the atonement of the Lord Jesus. He admitted the truth of all these things, but was filled with trifling unconcern. He frankly said that he had no hope of being better in his character, and that, on the contrary, he was satisfied he should grow worse. The next morning he was visited by Dr. Jekyl, who asked him whether, during the

whole time he had been confined in Newgate, he had once bowed his knees to the great God, making it his earnest request to Him to give him a sense of his sins, and to create in him a tender heart; he admitted that he had not, nor did he think it of any use. He was promised that if he would agree to pray morning and evening for the grace of God, an effort should be made with every probability of success, for a reprieve, and subsequently a pardon. But he would make no engagement, and was hung on the day appointed.

On the day of his execution, the father of this unhappy young man told Dr. Calamy that when the culprit was a very young child, he was exceedingly ill with a fever, and that both his wife and himself, thinking their lives were bound up in the life of the child, were exceedingly importunate with God in prayer that his life might be spared. A pious mother expostulated with him on the vehemence he manifested, and said she dreaded the consequence of his praying in such a way, and that it became him to leave the matter to an infinitely wise God. At length the father said, "Let him prove what he will, so he is but spared, I shall be satisfied." The old man added, "This I now see to have been my folly. For, through the just hand of God, I have lived to see this wretched son of mine a heart-breaking cross to them that loved him with the greatest tenderness, a disgrace to my whole family, and likely to bring my grey hairs with sorrow to my grave. I read my sin very distinctly in my punishment; but must own that God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."—*R. Arvine, A.M.*

It is of great importance that we should entreat the Spirit of God to enable us to pray as we ought. It is quite possible to ask for what may appear to us good things, but which, if we had them, would prove evil. Rachel, indulging a petulant disposition, said, "Give me children, or I die;" her desire was granted, and as the result, she died.

The late Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, writes, "I knew a case in which the minister, praying over a child, apparently dying, said: 'If it be Thy will, spare —' The poor mother's soul yearning for her beloved, exclaimed: 'It must be His will! I cannot bear if's.' The minister stopped. To the surprise of many the child recovered; and the mother, after almost suffering martyrdom by him while a stripling, lived to see him hanged before he was two-and-twenty! Oh, it is good to say, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'"—*Ibid.*

THE UNBELIEF OF GOOD MEN, AND ITS DIVINE ANTIDOTE.

(Verses 21-23.)

This incident in the history leads us to consider—

I. The proneness of even the best of men to unbelief.

When we think of the character of Moses, and the experiences of his past life, it seems almost incredible that he should “stagger at the promise of God through unbelief.” He was one of the great heroes of faith (Heb. xi. 24-28); he had witnessed the most marvellous manifestations of the Divine power; he had himself been the instrument of some of its most extraordinary achievements; yet for a little time his faith in the promise and power of God fails. The error of Moses consisted in his arraying the conclusions of human reason against the promise of God. (a) To his judgment the thing promised seemed impossible. Moses considered (1) The number to be supplied. “And Moses said, The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen.” The whole population could not have been less than two millions, and was probably more numerous. (2) The time for which the supply was to be continued. “And Thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.” (3) The inadequacy of their resources. “Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?” Of the flocks and herds some were needed for the sacrifices, and some would be required when they settled in the Promised Land. The result of the consideration of the case by Moses was, that he could not see how the promise could be fulfilled; and not seeing this, he failed to believe the promise. Even the most distinguished servants of the Lord amongst men have their infirmities. (b) “We need not to labour too curiously,” says Attersoll, “to clear the faithful of the remnants of sin and other infirmities, forasmuch as he and other the best of God’s ser-

vants have their failings in faith and obedience, as we see in the examples of Abraham, Lot, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, David, Peter, Thomas, Zacharias, and which of them not? (2 Chron. xv. 17; xvi. 12; Rom. vii. 17-19) because we know in part, and we prophesy in part; we are yet in our journey, and walk in our way, and run in a race, we are not yet attained to our journey’s end, we have not yet obtained the crown. Again, we proceed all from an unclean fountain (Job xiv. 4). There is a combat remaining in us between the flesh and the Spirit (Rom. vii. 23; Gal. v. 17), and these are contrary the one to the other, and can never be reconciled.” Two inferences should be heeded:—

1. *The most eminent saints continually need the grace of God.* “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe,” is an appropriate aspiration for even the holiest of men. And this, too, “Lord, increase our faith.”

2. *It behoves us to be slow to censure men.* We should rather take heed to ourselves, that we fail not.

“Search thine own heart. What paineth thee
In others, in thyself may be;
All dust is frail, all flesh is weak;
Be thou the true man thou dost seek.”
Whittier.

II. The Divine Antidote for unbelief in the good.

1. *Consideration of the past deeds of the Lord.* “And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” What He has done is an example of what, under similar circumstances and conditions, we may expect Him to do again. “The power that is unlimited can never be diminished.” Faith argues from the past to the present and the future. David did so, with the grandest results (1 Sam. xvii. 34-37; Psa. lxiii. 7). So also did Paul (2 Cor. i. 8-10; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). (c).

2. *Consideration of the unchangeableness of the Lord.* "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." "I am the Lord, I change not." The consideration of the immutability of God should inspire confidence in His promises.

3. *Consideration of the faithfulness of God.* "Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not." "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and

shall He not do? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Here, then, in the consideration of these great themes is Heaven's antidote for the proneness to unbelief in godly men.

Conclusion:

The subject suggests the inspiring fact that *history is an argument for faith in God of ever-increasing power*. Incalculably greater to-day than when it was addressed to Moses is the force of the Divine demand, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" as a rebuke of unbelief and an encouragement of faith.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I like to reason; I like to search out results from causes; but it is sweet also, in the midst of the turmoils and troubles of life, to rest in faith in God. It is sweet to be able to say, "I do not care for to-morrow. I do not fear what shall befall me. I will trust in God." To understand the philosophy of a Divine command, where I can, affords me satisfaction; but where a command comes from such an authority, and with such variety of illustration in nature, I do not care whether I understand the philosophy of it or not. My soul is hungry for it, and I accept it because my God has given it. I trust and rest in God simply because He has said, "You may, and you must." That is ground enough.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) All these four reflective men are in some way *unbelievers*. Nathanael cultivates inward piety, but *he cannot believe* that the holy heaven and the common world shall ever be one, as if angels came and went between them. Matthew earnestly desires, and promotes as he can, the rule of justice among men; but *he cannot believe* that the law of Truth will ever be the law of outward religious and political society. Philip is a student of the Scriptures, and can see much of the God of Israel in them and in the world, but not enough anywhere; and *he cannot believe* that God will show Himself to man so as thoroughly

to content the pious as the world seems to satisfy the worldly. Thomas has chosen the "better part;" he is determined to know the truth and not to trust to deceits. He, for one, will examine the pretensions and the evidences of things. He *has* examined, and is quite convinced that Jesus has no mere pretensions. Jesus, at least, is a real man, if there be no other and never should be. And yet Thomas *cannot believe* that "the way" Jesus takes is a safe successful way. Excellent men these four! reflective men; yet all in some degree, each in his own manner, unbelievers!—*Thomas T. Lynch.*

(c) Is God all-mighty? Then have no fears about the realization of His promises. Oftentimes it is difficult to see how certain promises are to be realized. We have nothing to do with that whatever. God keeps our hands off His promises quite as surely as He keeps them off His stars, and if He won't let us intermeddle with His planets, and do our little scrubbing and burnishing upon those great lights, He will not ask us to have anything to do with the outworking and realization of His promises. He asks that their fulfilment be left to Him, and afterwards he will challenge our own life as the witness, and answer, and confirmation of all that is gracious and all that is sure in the outworking of His words of promise.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD.

(Verse 23.)

For Introduction see the Illustrations. (a)

I shall try to mention some four or five cases in which men act as if they

really believed that God's hand had waxed short.

I. With regard to the Church as a whole, how often is it true that she so

behaveth herself as if she had a question in her mind as to whether the Lord's hand had waxed short?

She believes that the Divine hand was once mighty enough to bring in three thousand in one day by the simple preaching of Peter. She believes that her God was with her in olden times somightily that her poor illiterate preachers were more than a match for the scholars of Socrates and Solon, and were able to overturn the gods of the heathen, though they had both poetry and philosophy to be their bulwarks. She believes all this, and yet how often doth she act as though the Gospel had become effete and outworn, and the Spirit of God had been utterly withdrawn from her! . . . The doubts, the fears, the calculations, the policies, the judicious advices of too many Christians prove my point, that often the Church acts as if she thought the Lord's hand were waxed short. O Zion! get thee up! Come thou forth in simple confidence in His promise, and thou shalt see whether He will not do according to His Word.

II. When believers doubt their God with regard to Providence, the question might well be asked of them, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"

Some have had many losses and crosses in their business. Instead of getting forward, they are going back, and perhaps even bankruptcy stares them in the face. Or possibly, being hard-working men, they may have been long out of employment, and nothing seems to be before their eyes but the starvation of themselves and their little ones. It is hard to bear this . . . But dost thou doubt, O believer, as to whether God will fulfil His promise, wherein He said, "His place of defence"? &c. (Isa. xxxiii. 16). Wouldst thou question the advice of thy Master: "Therefore take no thought"? &c. (Matt. vi. 25-32). When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, yet you must mistrust and doubt Him! (b)

III. This question might be very

naturally suggested when a man who has faith in Christ is exercised with doubts and fears with regard to his own final perseverance or his own present acceptance in Christ.

Doubt not, I pray you; believe your God, and you shall prosper. The joy of the Lord is our strength, not the melancholy of our hearts.

IV. "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" is a question which I may well ask of any who are convinced of sin, but are afraid to trust their souls now, at this very hour, in the hand of a loving Saviour.

"Oh, He cannot save me, I am so guilty, so callous! Could I repent as I ought, could I but feel as I ought, then He could save me; but I am naked, and poor, and miserable. I have grieved away His Spirit; I have sinned against light and knowledge—against mercy—against constant grace received. He cannot save me." "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" Did He not save the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus? Why, then, can he not save you? Is it not written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin?" Has that blood lost its efficacy? Wouldst thou add to thy sin? Then doubt Christ's power to save thee. But wouldst thou be saved? Then dare, in the teeth of all thy sins, to trust my Master.

"He is able,
He is willing: doubt no more."

He is able, for He is God. He is willing, for He that died for us cannot be unwilling. Christ did not make any exception; He said, "*Him that cometh*," and that means any "him" in all the world who comes. Come, then, I pray thee: trust Him, &c.

V. You say, do you, that God will not avenge your sins upon you, that ye may go on in your iniquities, and yet meet with no punishment; that ye may reject Christ, and do it safely; trample on His blood, and yet God is so calm, that His anger will never flame forth against you? Well, soul, "thou shalt see whether His word shall come

to pass or not." But let me tell thee His hand is not waxed short; He is as strong to punish as when He bade the floods cover the earth; as powerful to

avenge as when He rained hail out of heaven upon the cities of the plain. Thou shalt see whether He will keep His word or not.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) It is a singular thing that such a question as this should ever be asked at all: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" If we look anywhere and everywhere, apart from the conduct of man, there is nothing to suggest the suspicion. Look at God's *creation*! Is there anything there which would make you say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" What pillar of the heavens hath begun to reel? What curtain of the sky hath been rent or moth-eaten? Have the foundations of the earth begun to start? Do they not abide as the Lord hath settled them? Hath the sun grown dim with age? or have the starry lamps flickered or gone out in darkness? Are there signs of decay to-day upon the face of God's creation? Have not howling tempests, the yawning ocean, and death-bearing hurricanes, asserted but yesterday their undiminished might? Say, is not the green earth as full of vitality, as ready to yield us harvests now, as it ever hath been? Do the showers fall less frequently? Hath the sun ceased to warm? Are there any signs and tokens that God's creation is tottering to its decay? No, journey where you will, you will see God is potent upon the face of the earth, and in the very bowels of the globe, as He was when He first said, "Let there be light, and there was light." There is nothing which would tempt us to the surmise or the suspicion that the Lord's hand hath waxed short. And look ye too in *Providence*; is there aught there that would suggest the question? Are not His prophecies still fulfilled? Doth He not cause all things to work together for good? Do the cattle on a thousand hills low out to Him for hunger? Do you meet with the skeletons of birds that have fallen to the ground from famine? Doth He neglect to give to the fish their food, or do the sea-monsters die? Doth not God still open His hand and supply the want of every living thing? Is He less bounteous to-day than He was in the time of Adam? Is not His cornucopia still as full? Doth He not still scatter mercies with both His hands right lavishly? Are there any tokens in Providence any more than in Nature, that God's arm hath waxed short? And look ye too in the matter of *Grace*: is there any token in the work of grace that God's power is failing? Are not sinners still saved? Are not prodigates still reclaimed? Are not drunkards still uplifted

from their sties to sit upon the throne with princes? Are not harlots as truly reclaimed as were those in the days of Christ? Is not the Word of God still quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword? Which of His arrows hath been blunted? Where have ye seen the sword of the Lord snapped in twain? When hath God assayed to melt a heart and failed in the attempt? Which of His people has found the riches of His grace drained dry? Which of His children has had to mourn that the unsearchable riches of Christ had failed to supply his need? In Grace, as well as in Providence and Nature, the unanimous verdict is that God is still Almighty, that He doeth as He wills, and fulfilleth all His promises and His counsels. How is it, then, that such a question as this ever came from the lips of God Himself? Who suggested it? What suggested it? What could there have been that should lead Him or any of His creatures to say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" We answer, there is but one creature that God has made that ever doubts Him. . . . It was left for *man*, the most favoured of all creatures, to mistrust his God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) And now, O true believer, what sayest thou to this picture? In the cold, cold winter, when the snows have fallen thick on every tree, and the ground is hard and crisp, ye have sometimes seen the charitable man open wide the window of his house, and scatter crumbs along the white snow, and ye have seen the birds come from all the trees around, and there they ate and were satisfied. A slanderer who lives next door tells you that that man starves his children. Do you believe him? Feed the sparrows and neglect the offspring of his loins—give crumbs to birds, and not feed his sons and daughters? You feel instinctively that the kind heart which remembers the fowls of heaven must yet more remember his own offspring. But what sayest thou to this picture concerning thyself? Thy God heareth the young ravens when they cry, and giveth liberally to all the creatures that His hands hath made, and will He forget His sons and His daughters—His people bought with blood, His own peculiar heritage? No; dare to believe Him *now*. His hand has not waxed short. Dare to trust Him *now*.—*Ibid.*

THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE LORD'S HAND.

(Verse 23.)

"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"

Let us apply this question—

I. To the Subject of Creative Manifestations. We are in the midst of a marvellous universe. Full of the wisdom and power of God. Now, some suppose Creation was finished, as related in Genesis. But that relates to this world only. Creation glorifies God. He can continue to create, &c. He may do so for His own glory. Myriads of worlds may rise in magnificent succession. Worlds now get old, may decay, and fall into ruin; and He may supply their place. As in the revivifications of the seasons. New harvests, new forms, &c.

II. To Divine Providences for His Church and People.

1. *The Preservation of His Church.* Its extension, prosperity, glory.

2. *The destruction to the enemies of the Church.* In the past He did it. Egypt, Babylon, &c.

3. *The good of His individual servants.* He can keep, deliver, bless. However dark, &c. Overrule; turn crosses into blessings, &c.

III. To the Salvation of the most guilty and obstinate sinners.

1. *Cannot His hand reach them in the lowest pit of guilt?*

2. *Break the heart of the flinty rock?*

3. *Humble and save the proudest and worst?* Manasseh, the thief, Saul, the Corinthians. We need despair of none.

IV. To the fulfilment of the Divine prophecies and promises.

1. *The glory of the Lord filling the earth.* Psa. lxxii. 17-19.

2. *The spread of universal holiness.*

3. *Universal worship.* Psa. lxxvii.

4. *The salvation of the world to Christ.* Phil. ii. 9-11. The world filled with righteousness, peace, and blessedness. The discouragements may be great and numerous; but the text answers them all.

Application.

1. *The text should lead us to Divine reliance.* Trust in the Lord, &c. This will cheer and strengthen us.

2. *To joyous hope.* No need of doubts and fears.

3. *To more earnest effort.*

4. *To profound humility.* God's hand alone can do His work.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

HELPFUL THOUGHTS FOR THE LORD'S SERVANTS.

(Verses 24-30.)

This section of the history presents several topics on which we may meditate with advantage:

I. The Obedience of Moses, an example for the Lord's Servants.

"And Moses went out, and told the people," &c. (verse 24). Very recently Moses had doubted the word of the Lord, and questioned His ability to fulfil His promises; but now he obeys His commands, trusting in Him to fulfil His promises. Doubt is not the normal state of a good man, but an exceptional thing in his life. It is ours, not to question the Lord concerning the reason

of His commands, or the way in which He will fulfil His promises; but trusting His promises, we should obey His commands. Faith and duty are ours; reasons and results are God's.

II. The Bestowment of the Spirit upon the seventy Elders, Encouragement for the Lord's Servants.

"And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave unto the seventy elders." Notice:—

1. *The Lord's care of His servants.* By granting to him the aid of these elders, He relieves Moses of the op-

pression of the burden of which he had complained. When the duties and responsibilities of His servants become too heavy, He lightens them either by diminishing their burdens, or by increasing their strength. He is a gracious Master, &c.

2. *The Lord's qualification of His servants.* When the elders were assembled about the tabernacle, the cloud of the Divine Presence, which had soared on high above it, came down, and the Lord spake unto Moses, and gave of His Spirit to the seventy elders (See notes on ver. 17). Those whom God calls to duty He also qualifies for it.

3. *The Lord's authentication of His servants.* "And it came to pass, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not add. But there remained two," &c. Under the impulse and inspiration of the Spirit of God they spoke to the people with such "admirable clearness and fulness, and readiness, and aptness of expression," and wisdom, that all who heard them were convinced that God was with them. By this sign the Lord accredited them to their office; this was their credential to the people, the Divine warrant for the exercise of their calling. God still authenticates His servants. In the holiness of their lives, in their qualifications for their work, and in the usefulness of their work, we mark the Divine credentials of the servants of the Lord.

III. The error of Joshua, Admonition to the Lord's Servants.

Two of the persons who were called to the eldership did not go up to the tabernacle, but remained in the camp; and the Spirit came upon them there, and they prophesied. This caused some excitement, and a boy went and told the matter to Moses. "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them." The prophesying of Eldad and Medad seemed to him an irregular and unauthorised thing. They were not in the company

of the others; they had not received the gift through the mediation of Moses; and Joshua fears that if they are not restrained, the honour and authority of Moses will be diminished. So he proposes to Moses to prohibit it. I discover no sufficient reason for supposing that Joshua was jealous of this prophesying on his own account. He was rather jealous for the honour of Moses, as the disciples of John the Baptist were for the honour of their Master (John iii. 26). Still the counsel of Joshua was unwise and rash. Let us take warning from his mistake. The Spirit of God is not limited by our poor notions and narrow parties. The streams of Divine influence are much too plenteous to be confined in the strait and shallow channels which we have scooped out for them. The true way of regarding new and seemingly irregular manifestations of religious feeling and effort is indicated by Jesus Christ in Mark ix. 38-40, and by the Apostle Paul in Phil. i. 14-18. (a)

IV. The Magnanimity of Moses, an Example for the Lord's Servants.

"And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that," &c. So far from being displeased with Eldad and Medad, Moses, who sought not his own honour, but the glory of God, rejoiced in the gifts bestowed upon them, and "gave expressions to the large-hearted wish, that the whole people of the Lord might prophesy. And most assuredly there can be no such thing now, under the grace of the New Testament, which works at large and unconstrained, as a confining of the Spirit of the Lord to this or to that place, to the communion of this or of that party. The Spirit bloweth where He listeth; where is the man who will or can hinder Him? Whenever devils are cast out there is the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 27, 28); wherever the name of Jesus is confessed, the confessor of that name is accepted before God, whether he stand in our roll or not." —*Stier.* (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I do dislike narrow churches, I do dislike little, little self-enclosing, self-subsisting clubs of so-called Christian professors. I find nothing narrow in Christianity. I find Christianity the broadest system, either of religion or of thought, or of philanthropy, that I can find in the world. If there are persons that wrap their sectarian garments about them, and say, "We are the people of God, and there is no other people that belong to Him," then are they liars, and the truth is not in them. Little people that live in a nutshell, which they mistake for the universe, that have their own little Bethel, and their own little hymn book, and their own little sectarian movements, and their own little heaven, I do not know anything about them, except that, having heard about them, I do not wish to prosecute inquiry further. If there are such people—no, I would alter that grammar, and say if there be such people, hoping that their existence is quite contingent and future—if there be such people they know nothing about the Divine, catholic, universal liberty of Jesus Christ's teaching. I trust that we all belong to the Broad Church, that we hail a brother, whatever be the temporary name by which he is known in ecclesiastical life; and that we allow heart to speak to heart, and know something of the intercourse of brotherly unity in Christ Jesus.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) If ever you can say a good word of a fellow-minister, I charge it upon your honour to say it, and if you cannot speak a good word you need not speak a bad one. Don't set up your own style of preaching as the standard by which to try the preaching of all other men. Try (hard lesson!) to be thankful for another man's success. When you can heartily thank God for another minister's prosperity (and that minister in your own neighbourhood), you will have taken an eminent position in the temple of Christian magnanimity. It is easy to thank God for the success of a man who is fifty miles distant from your own ministerial orbit; but to give thanks for the success of a man who preaches within an hour's walk of your own pulpit, that is what I mean by magnanimity. Men who do not profess Christianity, are not expected to conform to its requirements, but surely its exponents and defenders should merge their little selfishness in the all-absorbing importance of winning the world back to filial love and reverent loyalty.—*Ibid.*

The truth is, that it is natural to all of us to envy the growing reputation of others; and to be jealous where it seems likely to trench upon our own. We may speak very justly of the littleness of mind which is displayed by the envious and the jealous; nevertheless, this littleness of mind belongs naturally to most, if not all of us. And he wins a fine triumph, or displays great command over himself, who can be content with inferiority,

provided the cause of God and truth be advanced. Now, this is precisely the case in which both Moses and John showed greatness of soul. And though it be one in which we have most reason to look for a forgetfulness of self, experience shows that the expectation is but too often disappointed. In other cases we can hardly wonder that men should be mortified by the superiority of their rivals; that is, look with dislike and bitterness on those who eclipse them in the respects in which they most wish to shine. The courtier, for example, who has long sought to stand high in the favour of his sovereign; and who perceives that a younger candidate, who has just entered the field, is fast outstripping him, so that the probability is that he will soon be widely distanced,—we cannot marvel if he regard the youthful competitor with irritated feelings in place of generously rejoicing in his rapid success. It would be a very fine instance of magnanimity if this courtier were to cede gracefully the place to his rival, and offer him, with marks of sincerity which could not be mistaken, his congratulations on having passed him in the race. But we could not look for such magnanimity. The occasion, if we may venture to say so, scarcely warrants it; the whole business is of so worldly, so ignoble a character, that the high principles of religion can scarcely be supposed to be brought into exercise; yet the loftiness of spirit is such as that these principles alone can be considered adequate to produce or effect. The case, however, is widely different when it is in the service of God, and not of an earthly king, that the two men engage. Here by the very nature of the service, the grand thing aimed at is the glory of God and not personal distinction or aggrandisement; and there is, therefore, ground for expecting that if God's glory be promoted, there will be gladness of heart in all Christians, whoever the agent who has been specially honoured. But, alas! for the infirmity of human nature; there is room for questioning that even Christians can be jealous of each other, and feel it a sore trial when they are distanced and eclipsed in being instrumental in promoting Christianity. I can imagine to myself a missionary settlement, where a devoted servant of God has striven many years with idolatry, but has made but little way in winning heathens to the faith. Here and there he can point to a convert from superstition, but, for the most part, he seems to have laboured in vain: and is forced to exclaim with the prophet, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" And then there arrives in that missionary settlement, another and a younger preacher of truth, and God has endowed him with higher powers, and honours him with greater success, so that there is a rapid demolition of the whole system of heathenism—savages renouncing by hordes

ancestral superstitions; forming themselves into peaceful communities, and embracing, with delight, the Religion of Jesus Christ. It is very easy to say that the elder missionary ought to feel nothing but exultation and thankfulness, as he witnesses the glorious results which follow the labours of youth. The object that he had nearest his heart was the conversion of Pagans; what should he do but rejoice in the accomplishment of his object, though effected through the instrumentality of another? And we do not say that the elder missionary would have other feelings than those which he is bound by his profession to entertain; nevertheless, there will have been a great deal to try that missionary, and we can hardly doubt—for as much as his having been a Christian will not have destroyed his being a man—that his breast must have been the scene of no inconsiderable struggle; that there must have been earnest prayer, and earnest resistance to natural feelings, ere he

could bring himself to survey, with composure, the distinguished honours which God is putting on another. We are far enough from regarding it as a matter of course, that a veteran in the missionary work would feel contented and pleased at seeing that work which had gone on so slowly with himself, progress with amazing rapidity when undertaken by a younger labourer; on the contrary, arguing from the known tendencies of our nature, we assume that he must have had a hard battle with himself before he could really rejoice in the sudden advance of Christianity; and we should regard him as having won, through the assistance of Divine grace, a noble victory over some of the strongest cravings of the heart when he frankly bid the stripling God speed! and rejoiced as he saw the idols fall prostrate before him.

Here you have very nearly the case of Moses and John.—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

ENVY.

(Verse 29.)

“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake?”

To envy is “to grieve at another’s good; to fret or hate another on account of his superiority.” Envy “is an affection,” says Attersoll, “compounded of sorrow and malice. For such persons are malicious, always repining and grudging at the gifts of God bestowed upon others, and as it were look asquint at them, as Gen. xxvi. 12, 13, 14, 27; xxx. 1; xxxi. 1; Mark ix. 38; John iii. 26, 27.”

“Envy,” says Jeremy Collier, “is an ill-natured vice, and is made up of meanness and malice. It wishes the force of goodness to be strained, and the measure of happiness abated. It laments over prosperity, and sickens at the sight of health. It oftentimes wants spirit as well as good nature.” (a)

Concerning this vice we call attention to three facts:—

I. It is sadly common.

It is almost invariably present and active in mean souls; and it has been discovered in souls which in other respects were noble. Here it is in Joshua, a man of brave and beautiful character. True, he was not envious on his own account; but he was for the sake of his

master. Great men are not free from littlenesses. Strong men are generally weak in some point. Good men, on earth, are not without their imperfections, and are liable to fall into sin. Even excellencies, if not properly regulated, like Joshua’s zeal for the honour of Moses, may lead to error and sin. Wherefore it behoves us to be on our guard against envy. Endeavour to rejoice in the prosperity of others, &c. (b)

II. It is extremely foolish.

“Envy,” says Attersoll, “is a very torment to the envious, who envying at others, do plague and punish themselves. For as envy hurteth not him at all that is envied, so the envious man carrieth about within his own bosom an inward and home-bred tormentor that never suffereth him to be quiet. Such a monster is spite and envy, that if he see, or hear, or think another to have more or as much, to go beyond him or be equal unto him, it is a quotidian, nay, a continual fever without any intermission, it paineth him day and night (Psa. cxii. 9, 10).” “Every other sin,” says Burton, “hath some pleasure annexed to it, or will admit of some excuse; but envy wants both: we should strive against it, for if indulged

in, it will be to us a foretaste of hell upon earth." "Envy," says Solomon, "is the rottenness of the bones." (c)

III. It is heinously sinful.

Moses' sin of Joshua, in envying for Moses' sake, because of the exercise of the prophetic gift by Eldad and Medad, is seen in that—

1. *The gift was bestowed by God.* He bestoweth His gifts as it pleaseth Him; and to envy those who receive them is to call into question His wisdom or righteousness in bestowing them. Comp. Matt. xx. 15. Many of the things which excite envy in our day are gifts of God.

2. *The gift was for the benefit of all the people.* The eldership of Eldad and Medad was for the good of all Israel, and by this gift of prophecy the Lord accredited them to their office in the eyes of the people. The spiritual gifts of every Christian are for the advantage of the entire Church. How sinful then to envy them their possession!

3. *Joshua's envy was a violation of the law of brotherly kindness.* To envy is always to outrage Christian charity. "Charity envieth not." Mark the evil features of this vice as it is portrayed by Socrates: "An envious man waxeth lean with the fatness of his neighbours. Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge, the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of virtue. Envy is the filthy slime of the soul; a venom, a poison, or quicksilver which consumeth the flesh, and drieth up the marrow of the bones." How much more loathsome should it appear to us, who should view it in the light of the teaching and spirit of Jesus Christ!

Conclusion :

1. *Cultivate Christian contentment.*
2. *"Follow after charity."*
3. *Rejoice in the gifts of God in whomsoever we discover them.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In some unlucky dispositions, there is such an envious kind of pride, that they cannot endure that any but themselves should be set forth for excellent; so when they hear one justly praised, they will either seek to discount his virtues, or, if they be like a clear night, eminent, they will stab him with a *but* of detraction, as if there were something yet so foul, as did obnubilate even his brightest glory. Thus when their tongue cannot justly condemn him, they will leave him in suspected ill, by silence. Surely, if we considered detraction to be bred of envy, nested only in deficient minds, we should find that the applauding of virtue would win us far more honour than the seeking slyly to disparage it. That would show we loved what we commended, while this tells the world we grudge at what we want in ourselves.—*Feltham.*

We shall find it in Cain, the proto-murderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of envy. We shall find it in the dark and gloomy and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the King of Israel, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yea, it was envy that perpetrated that most atrocious crime ever planned in hell or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which Nature gave signs of abhorrence by the rend-

ing of the rocks: I mean the crucifixion of Christ; for the evangelist tells us, that for envy, the Jews delivered our Lord.—*J. A. James.*

(b) Envy is a weed that grows in all soils and climates, and is no less luxuriant in the country than in the court; is not confined to any rank of men or extent of fortune, but rages in the breasts of all degrees. Alexander was not prouder than Diogenes; and it may be, if we would endeavour to surprise it in its most gaudy dress and attire, and in the exercise of its full empire and tyranny, we should find it in schoolmasters and scholars, or in some country lady, or the knight, her husband; all which ranks of people more despise their neighbours than all the degrees of honour in which courts abound; and it rages as much in a sordid affected dress as in all the silks and embroideries which the excess of the age and the folly of youth delight to be adorned with. Since then it keeps all sorts of company, and wriggles itself into the liking of the most contrary natures and dispositions, and yet carries so much poison and venom with it, that it alienates the affections from heaven, and raises rebellion against God Himself; it is worth our utmost care to watch it in all its disguises and approaches, that we may discover it on its first entrance, and dislodge it before it procures a shelter or retiring place to lodge and conceal itself.—*Lord Clarendon.*

(c)
Of all antagonists, most charity
I find in envious men, for they do
Sooner hurt themselves, than hurt or me or
Him that raised me up. An envious man is
Made of thoughts; to ruminate much doth
melt

The brain, and make the heart grow lean. Such
men
As these, that in opposing, waste their proper
Strength; that sacrifice themselves in silly
Hope to butcher us; save revenge a labour;
And die to make experiment of wrath.
Sir. W. Davenant.

KIBROTH-HATTAAYAH: STRIKING ILLUSTRATIONS OF SOLEMN TRUTHS.

(Verses 31-35.)

In these verses we have illustrations of several important truths—

I. The Sovereignty of God.

"And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails," &c. This wind does not appear to have been an ordinary one, the simple effect of a natural cause. It was Divinely ordered for this special purpose. In this great quantity of quails, bestowed in accordance with the promise of the Lord, the Divine Hand is equally manifest. The wind and the quails are both illustrations of the power and dominion of the Lord. His sovereignty is universal. The mightiest and the meanest of creatures are subject unto Him. This fact should minister,—

1. *Encouragement to those who trust Him.* He can never want means or instruments to help them; He can make all things to promote their interests. He can use the ravens as the dispensers of His bounty, as He did for Elijah, &c.

2. *Warning to those who rebel against Him.* He can marshall all ranks of creatures, and all the forces of nature against you, if it please Him so to do. "Hast thou an arm like God?" "Who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?" "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry," &c.

II. The eagerness with which men toil in the pursuit of temporal and material good.

"And the people stood up all that day, and all night," &c. (verse 32). See with what zeal and diligence they gather and preserve the quails. They forego their ordinary sleep and rest, &c. It is an illustration of the way in which men pursue pleasure, and scheme

and toil for money, &c. Tens of thousands to-day are as eager in the pursuit of the perishable things of earth and time as the Israelites were in gathering quails. And like the Israelites, many are laboriously accumulating what they will never live to enjoy. Death shall cut them down in the midst of their possessions, just as they are composing themselves to take their "ease, eat, drink, and be merry." How great is the contrast between the eagerness with which men pursue these earthly and temporal things and their lukewarmness and indolence as to the things which are eternal and divine! "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," &c. (John vi. 27); "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. (Matt. vi. 19-21.) (a)

III. The gratification of the desires of men resulting in their ruin.

"And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed," &c. (verse 33). Their passionate lust was gratified, and the gratification killed them.

"Heaven is most just, and of our pleasant
vices
Makes instruments to scourge us."
Shakespeare.

The thing we have eagerly coveted often proves when attained—

1. *Unsatisfactory in possession.* The realization is a painful contrast to the anticipation; it disappoints us, it saddens us, &c. (b)

2. *The occasion of spiritual loss and harm.* Gratified appetites often lead to crushed aspirations; carnal luxuries to spiritual famine; temporal riches to eternal destitution, &c. (c)

IV. A sin, which on its first commission was mercifully passed over, if repeated may call forth the judgment of God.

They had murmured aforetime, and the Lord gave them quails, and did not punish them (Exod. xvi. 2-13). But now, after additional proofs of His power and goodness, they murmur again and more wickedly, and He sends them quails and smites them in anger. Persistence in wickedness must lead to perdition. (Prov. xxviii. 14 ;

xxix. 1). "Relapses are desperate, where the sickness itself is not."

V. The sins and punishments of one generation should be remembered as a warning to future generations.

"And he called the name of that place Kibroth-Hattaavah; because there they buried the people that lusted." So Moses endeavours to perpetuate, as a warning to others, the memory of their sin, and the judgment of God which it called forth. Comp. 1 Cor. x. 5, 6.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Oh, what tears have strong men shed in this city, tears which fell not outside the cheek, these had been harmless; but they dropped within the soul, to scald and sear it with ever-abiding melancholy! That which cheered and comforted them, the gain of wealth, has gone, and the busy merchants have been ready for the lunatic asylum or for suicide. How these golden bellows will cease to blow when men come to die! Ah, how little will wealth stimulate the joys of the last moment! Fool, thou hast only bought thyself a marble tomb, and what is that to thy poor dust and ashes? Thou art now to leave all thou hast; thou art as the partridge that sitteth on the eggs, but hatcheth them not; thy joys are all for another, and not for thee. Oh, how often do men that have been happy enough in the accumulation of riches, die in utter misery, with all their gold and silver about them, because their bellows of avaricious acquisition have been burned by their very success, and the flame of hope and ambition has hopelessly died out!—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(b) Persons in the midst of pleasure know more of its emptiness than any minister who preaches of the worthlessness of this world. The votaries of pleasure are the least satisfied with it. He who inveighs against immoralities and vices has not half so strong a conviction of their rottenness as they who commit them. No man has such a sense of the mischief and misery of intemperance as the very drunkard himself, when for a moment he staggers back from his bowl and has one of those lucid intervals in which his better nature returns, and he is led to loathe himself as other men loathe him. No man knows

how heavy care is, and how weak human strength is under it, so well as the elect children of sorrow. No man ever counts riches at their true value, as measured by the other world, so truly as business men who have been the most industrious, the most avaricious, the most greedy, and are after all the most unsatisfied.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(c) Upon such a wretched creature, who in life thought nothing of death, nothing of God, nothing of man, and who took God's treasures and prosperities as pirates take jewels and coin, to hide them in the cave of his own selfishness—upon such a one there was an eye beaming steadily down, and, unheard by him, a voice went forth in heaven, which should ere long put all his arrogance and selfishness to shame. For, while men were calling him rich, and making him honourable; while his relations flattered him, and his dependents fawned upon him; while men stood out of his path, and turned to look back admiringly after him, and to say to the stranger newly come to town, "Knowest thou who that is? That is the great and wealthy Mr. Fat-soul!"—amid all these congratulations, and admirations, and human praises, there were others looking at him, and expressing opinions about him not quite so complimentary. For God and holy angels looked down upon his gross abundance, upon his fat and dozing ease, and upon his arrogant self-congratulations; and God calmly said to this man, who stood so large, who was so prospered, and who very likely was the topmost man of the whole circle in which he moved, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."—*Ibid.*

KIBROTH-HATTAVAH: THE GRAVES OF LUST.

(Verses 31-34).

We will stand by those graves, and listen to their teachings: they may save us from standing by the graves of the

idols of our own hearts. I shall endeavour to illustrate this subject by dwelling on three principles.

I. There are perpetual resurrections of easily besetting sins.

This lusting was no novelty in their experience ; it was the besetting temptation of the desert, and the besetting sin of their hearts. But they ought to have viewed the first rising of its ghastly shape with horror ; there were graves enough in the path from Egypt, to remind them of its deadly work. God had been at great pains to teach them the lesson of dependence, that "man doth not live by bread alone," &c. (Exod. xiv. 10-16 ; xvi. 1-5 ; xvii. 1-17). And now with firmer assurance than ever that God was in the midst of them, to bring them into the place which He had prepared, they resumed their march through the unknown desert paths. The tabernacle, the ark, the order of the camp, the pillar of cloud and flame, were all among them, the pledge of His presence. But all in vain. They must have flesh, or they would give up the enterprise, and die in despair. And they had flesh ; they were fed, were crammed with it to nausea, and with it "God sent leanness into their souls." I dwell on two points of large importance for the understanding of this history.

1. *The side from which the temptation came to them* (verses 4-6). This mixed multitude corresponds to the troop of disorderly passions and appetites with which we suffer ourselves to march through the desert of life. The mixed multitude was but loosely attached to them. They were a loose, coarse, common company, with nothing to dignify, elevate, inspire. No wonder they fainted, murmured, lusted ; and thought flesh for to-day was better than Canaan to-morrow, and heaven beyond. The question was not one of sustenance. Enough for appetite was there ; enough for all the uses of life, guaranteed by God ; "but they wept again, saying, who shall give us flesh to eat ;" &c. Lust was strong in them, the love of the satisfaction of the bodily appetites for the sake of the momentary pleasure they bring. And appetite runs swiftly into lust in every one of us ; each act

of indulgence opens a fresh mouth which craves to be fed. The moment you take pleasure in the indulgence of appetite beyond the use for which it was ordained by God, you take an element into your life which will humble it, and drag its glory in the dust. It is the grand battle of life, to teach lust the limits of Divine law.

2. *The special season when the easily-besetting sin rose up and again made them its slave.* Look at this orderly and gallant host. They had been baptised as God's soldiers by the splendours of the Mount of the Law. Full of Divine joy, zeal, courage, hope, they set forward, &c. "Scant fare, hard marching, fierce battles, but exhilarate us. The flesh-pots, the melons, the garlic, they belong to the days of our bondage ; we are free men now, and their power to tempt us is gone." And so many a gallant young spirit, having heard the trumpet call of the Gospel, and joined the glorious company of the soldiers of the Cross, feels in the first pride of strength and flush of joy, that the flesh is so bruised, as to be broken and crushed for ever. But dread the hour when the glow begins to die down ; when the practical burdens, pains, trials, which you still meet with, prove to you that the Divine life on earth is no paradise regained ; when you find your strength barely equal to the demands made upon it, and see stretching on through long years a path of struggle, denial and mortification of the flesh, the end of which is not yet in sight.

Beware of your best moments, as well as of your worst ; or rather the moments which succeed the best. They are the most perilous of all. Just when the consciousness of triumph seems to permit and justify disarmament for a moment, the subtle foe with whom you have to deal will steal in on you, and win a treacherous victory. Never relax the strain. Never allow temptation within arm's length. Never believe that the devil is asleep ; that a besetting sin is eradicated, &c. "Lay aside every weight," &c.

II. There comes a point in the

history of the indulgence of besetting sins, when God ceases to strive with us and for us against them, and lets them have their way.

1. *God has great patience with the weaknesses and sins of the flesh.* But it is a dreadful mistake to suppose that therefore He thinks lightly of them. He regards them as sins that must be conquered, and no matter by what sharp discipline, extirpated and killed.

2. *Hence all the severer discipline by which the Lord seeks to purge them, the various agencies by which He fights with us and for us against their tyrannous power.* What is life but one long discipline of God for the cleansing of the flesh? Are not the after-pains of departed sensual joys among its chief stings and thorns? God has made a sure link of connexion between such sins and their penalties. The body itself is made the index of its indulgence, &c. Does He not give us the bread of heaven, that He may waken within us a taste for purer pleasures, and lead us out of the coils of the fleshly tempters, by giving us the food of a Diviner life? It is only when a man *will* not enter into his Father's counsel in this; *will* not suffer the higher tastes to develope themselves, and the higher appetites to indulge their craving with the bread of God; *will* grovel when God gives him wings to soar; *will* clamour for flesh when the bread of God is in his very hand: it is only then, when the evil becomes deadly, that God stays His hand, withdraws His guardian angel, and leaves the will to itself.

3. *Let alone by God.* "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone!" is to any mind among the most awful sentences in the word of God. It is very wonderful to see how often, if a man is bent on an end which is not God's end, God gives it him, and it becomes his curse. God does not curse; He leaves

us to ourselves; that is curse enough, and from that curse, what arm can save us? We *will* have it, and we shall have it.

III. The end of that way is, inevitably and speedily, a grave.

The grave of lust is one of the most awful of the inscriptions on the headstones of the great cemetery, the world. The words in Psa. cvi. 13-15, cast much light on this passage. There the lust is spoken of as the grave of the soul. And I believe that it is the common form of God's judgment. Where He buries one in the wilderness, He suffers a thousand to bury themselves in their lust. It is the inevitable end of all wanton self-indulgence; either a sharp judgment, or that slow pining of soul which makes the body its grave. . . . Where are the graves? I need only look on that sensual face, that bloated form, that dull and glassy eye, that brazen brow, to tell. . . . How many have learnt now to laugh at emotions which once had a holy beauty in their sight; to fence skilfully with appeals which once would have thrilled to the very core of their hearts; to grasp at advantages which once they would have passed with a scornful anathema, and to clutch at the gold which was once the glad instrument of diffusing benefits around! Yes! there are graves enough around us—graves of passion, graves of self-will, graves of lust.

Beware! young men; young women, beware! The grave-diggers began their work far back in those wretched histories. The first step was the really fatal one: the first flying, in sorrow and heart-ache, to any refuge but God. Beware! Each act of indulgence makes the grave wider and deeper, where the whole breadth of God-like faculty will at length lie buried; and it fixes in the brain a memory which will one day turn tyrant, and be the dread avenger of a murdered hope. — *J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*

THE GRAVES OF LUST.

(Verse 34.)

The circumstances leading to the fact of the text are full of instruction to us. The mischief originated with "the mixed multitude." These were the rabble that had followed the Israelites out of Egypt; who having seen what God had done for His people in Egypt, thought it was a good chance to better themselves by so doing. They soon found out the mistake they had made, and began to murmur and to excite the people to discontent. Their connection with the history suggests—

1. *That those who join themselves to God's Church from worldly motives are ever disappointed.*

2. *That such characters ever do harm to the Church.*

The events which gave rise to the text show *how easily God can provide for our necessities, and punish us for our sins!* To Moses it seemed impossible to feed this vast multitude with flesh. God said, "I will do it for a month, until they are surfeited with it." How easily He keeps His promise! It is never a difficult matter to Him to help us. Let us trust Him. *How easily He can punish!* The very blessing, owing to their conduct, became their curse. They were wayward, and God let them have their own way, than which no greater curse can befall man. God can punish by plenty as well as by scarcity. What people have lusted after often becomes their torment.

I. It is the tendency of lust to shorten life and to bring men to an untimely grave.

The word *lust* in the Bible has, for the most part, its general meaning of inordinate desire—man's corrupt nature ruling instead of being ruled, and held in check. The finger of God has written on all gluttony, intemperance, debauchery—"This is the pathway to the grave." There is nothing exceptional in the death of these Israelites. There is no fact better attested than

this, that all living for the animal in man destroys the body as well as the soul. When intellect becomes the slave of passion, and man is ruled by his lusts, he transgresses the laws of health, undermines his constitution, and soon sinks into the grave. Our animal desires are good servants; but, when they gain the mastery, they are fearful tyrants, loading the conscience with guilt and the body with disease, ruining life, and making eternity a hell. The Romans, it is said, held their funerals at the Gate of Venus, to teach that lust shortens life. The pleasures of sin are dearly bought. There are pleasures in sin, which have great attraction to our sinful nature. Folly's house, as Solomon tells us, is full of forbidden sweets; there is the pleasure of the sensualist, the vanities of the giddy and the gay, and the fatal cup which has such deadly hold on our land; they are there to attract, and they do attract corrupt hearts; but over the portal is written—"The dead are there—her guests are in the depths of hell."

II. Let us record some of our feelings as we contemplate "the graves of lust."

These graves made a deep impression on the mind of Moses, as we see from his giving the name to the encampment. It was, indeed, a sad, sad funeral, &c. The grave ever suggests sober thoughts. But all by the grave is not sad. Gospel light paints the rainbow of hope in our tears, as we place there the dead in Christ, with the assurance that we shall be re-united in the "home over there." But graves like these of the text—how sad! As we stand by them there are two feelings prominent—

1. The one is of *intense pity*, that man should be so foolish as to live in sin when he knew how it would end; that life should be so wasted, and opportunities lost, &c.

2. The other is of *awful solemnity*. He is gone! but whither? He has given up the ghost; but where is he? He is somewhere, &c. We cannot but think of his future.

"Wrapp'd in a Christless shroud,
He sleeps the Christless sleep;
Above him, the eternal cloud,
Beneath, the fiery deep.

Laid in a Christless tomb,
There, bound with felon-chain,
He waits the terror of his doom,
The judgment and the pain.

O Christless shroud, how cold!
How dark, O Christless tomb!
O grief that never can grow old!
O endless, hopeless doom!

O Christless sleep, how sad!
What waking shalt thou know?
For thee no star, no dawning glad,
Only the lasting woe!

To rocks and hills in vain
Shall be the sinner's call;
O day of wrath and death and pain,
The lost soul's funeral!

O Christless soul, awake
Ere thy last sleep begin!
O Christ, the sleeper's slumbers break,
Burst Thou the bands of sin."

Bonar.

Thank God, this is possible now. While we are on earth we may obtain salvation, &c.

Let us all—

1. *Ascertain whether or no we are on the way to this grave.*

2. *Resolve through the help of God that we will not be there.*

Seek Jesus Christ. He, and He only, can rescue us from the power, the curse, and the consequences of sin.—
David Lloyd.

CHAPTER XII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *The Ethiopian woman, &c.* Heb.: "The woman, the Cushite." This could not have been Zipporah, who was a Midianite, not a Cushite. And even if it be supposed that Miriam called her a Cushite from feelings of contempt and bitterness, yet the historian would not have confirmed the epithet by adding, "for he had taken a Cushite woman." Moreover it is exceedingly improbable that Miriam should have reproached Moses with a marriage made many years previously, and long before he received the call to his great mission. The probability is that Zipporah had died, and Moses had entered into "marriage with a Cushite woman, who either sprang from the Cushites, dwelling in Arabia, or from the foreigners who had come out of Egypt along with the Israelites." Such a marriage was perfectly allowable, so long as the woman was not a daughter of Canaan. Exod. xxxiv. 11-16.

Verse 2. *Hath He not spoken also by us?* Aaron, as the high-priest, was the spiritual head of the whole nation, and as a prophetess Miriam was distinguished above all the women of Israel. Having received a measure of the prophetic spirit (Exod. iv. 15; xv. 20), they aspired to a share in the authority of Moses.

Verse 3. *Now the man Moses was very meek, &c.* It has been objected that Moses, being a humble and modest man, would not have written this verse. Hence Dr. A. Clarke translates, "Now this man Moses was *depressed* or *afflicted* more than any man of that land."

Fuerst renders מֵיָדָה, in this place, "a humble one." Sept.: *παῖς*. Vulg.: *mitis*. Keil and Del.: "meek." This seems to us the best rendering. The objections which have been raised against it are not valid. The statement "is not an expression of vain self-display, or a glorification of his own

gifts and excellencies, which he prided himself upon possessing above all others. It is simply a statement which was indispensable to a full and correct interpretation of all the circumstances." When we regard these words "as uttered by Moses, not *proprio motu*, but under the direction of the Holy Spirit which was upon him (cf. xi. 17), they exhibit a certain 'objectivity,' which is a witness at once to their genuineness and also to their inspiration. There is about these words, as also about the passages in which Moses no less unequivocally records his own faults (cf. xx. 12 sqq.; Exod. iv. 24 sqq.; Deut. i. 37), the simplicity of one who bare witness of himself, but not to himself (cf. St. Matt. xi. 28, 29). The words are inserted to explain how it was that Moses took no steps to vindicate himself, and why consequently the Lord so promptly intervened."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 6-8. *If there be a prophet among you, &c.* Keil and Del.: "If there is a prophet of Jehovah to you (*i.e.* if you have one), I make myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream (בֶּרָא, lit. 'in him,' inasmuch as a revelation in a dream fell within the inner sphere of the soul-life). Not so my servant Moses: he is approved in My whole house; mouth to mouth I speak to him, and as an appearance, and that not in enigmas; and he sees the form of Jehovah. Why are ye not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?"

"Through this utterance on the part of Jehovah, Moses is placed above all the prophets, in relation to God and also to the whole nation. The Divine revelation to the prophets is thereby restricted to the two forms of inward intuition (vision and dream) . . . The prophets were consequently simply organs, through whom Jehovah made known His counsel and will at certain times, and in relation to special circumstances and features in the development of His kingdom. It was not so with Moses. Jehovah had placed him over all His house, had called him to

be the founder and organizer of the kingdom established in Israel through his mediatorial service, and had found him faithful in His service. With this servant (θεραπων, LXX.) of His, He spake mouth to mouth, without a figure or figurative cloak, with the distinctness of a human interchange of thought; so that at any time he could inquire of God and wait for the Divine reply. Hence Moses was not a prophet of Jehovah, like many others, not even merely the first and highest prophet, *primus inter pares*, but stood above all the prophets, as the founder of the theocracy, and mediator of the Old Covenant . . . The prophets subsequent to Moses simply continued to build upon the foundation which Moses laid. And if Moses stood in this unparalleled relation to the Lord, Miriam and Aaron sinned grievously against him, when speaking as they did."

Verse 7. *My servant Moses, &c.* Comp. Heb. iii. 1-6.

Verse 10. *Leprous.* See pp. 75-77.

Verse 12. *Let her not be as one dead, &c., "i.e., like a still-born child, which comes into the world half decomposed. His reason for making this comparison was, that leprosy produces decomposition in the living body."*—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 14. *If her father had but spit, &c.* To spit in the face was a mark of extreme contempt. See Deut. xxv. 9; Job xxx. 10; Isa. i. 6; Mark xiv. 65. When a parent did this to his child, it is said the child was banished from his presence for seven days. How much more, then, should Miriam, who had sinned so grievously and whom God had smitten with leprosy, be exiled from the people and presence of God for seven days!

Verse 16. *The wilderness of Paran* "was the great tract south of Palestine, commencing soon after Sinai, as the people advanced northwards,—that perhaps now known as the desert *Et-Tih*," or the desert of the Wandering. "Between the wilderness of Paran and that of Zin no strict demarcation exists in the narrative, nor do the natural features of the region, so far as yet

ascertained, yield a well-defined boundary." (See *The Speaker's Comm.*, and Keil and Del. on Chap. x. 12; Smith's *Dict. of Bible, Arts. Kadesh, Paran,*

and *Wilderness of the Wandering*; and the maps of *Egypt* and the *Peninsula of Sinai*, in Stanley's *Sinai and Pal.*)

THE SIN OF MIRIAM AND AARON: EVIL SPEAKING, DIVINE HEARING, AND SAINTLY SILENCE.

(Verses 1-3.)

Consider:

I. The Sin of Miriam and Aaron.

"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses," &c. In considering this sin, let us notice—

1. *Its root.* The source of this evil speaking was (so we infer from verse 2) jealousy on the part of Miriam and Aaron at the authority exercised, and the powers assumed by Moses. They were envious of his position and power, and ambitious for the exercise of equal authority. As Dr. Kitto has pointed out, the position assigned to Aaron "in the commonwealth was in some respects superior to that of Moses. The function of Moses was temporary, and would pass away with his life; whereas Aaron's was permanent in himself and his heirs, and would leave him and them the foremost and most important persons in the state. He might not therefore always regard with patience the degree in which his own high office was superseded by the existing authority of Moses." The fact that he was the elder brother, probably contributed further to his discontent and jealousy. Miriam also was jealous and ambitious. It seemed to her, that being a prophetess, she ought to have a more eminent position and greater power. Here in their mean jealousy and "vaulting ambition" we have the root of their sin. (a).

2. *Its occasion.* It is probable that the fact that Aaron and Miriam had not been consulted in the choice of the seventy elders awakened their discontent. But that which they put forth as the occasion of their reproaches was the marriage which Moses had con-

tracted with the Cushite woman. This seems to have annoyed Miriam, and led her to engage Aaron in envious and evil speeches. That Miriam was the instigator of the open rebellion appears from three things: (1) That she is named before Aaron. (2) From the use of the feminine verb *תִּבְרַר* in ver.

1; and (3) from the fact that the punishment fell upon her only, and not upon Aaron. It appears that Aaron was deficient in firmness, and was too easily persuaded by others. Weakly and wickedly he yielded to the desire of the people for a golden idol (Exod. xxxii); and now at the instigation of his sister he unites in rebellion against the leader whom God had appointed. It is natural that the wife of Moses would be regarded with feelings of respect and honour in the camp. Miriam was jealous of these honours; she wished to occupy the rank of chief lady in the camp; hence she instigated this mean and sinful rebellion.

3. *Its expression.* They "spake against Moses," &c. Evil speaking is a grievous offence in the sight of God. But when, as in this case, the evil speeches are directed against His chosen servants, the sin is greatly aggravated. "Jealousy, the green-eyed monster," discovers flaws in and heaps reproaches upon its object, even though his character and conduct be most faultless and beautiful. The bitter feeling goes forth in unjust and bitter speech. (b)

II. The Divine Cognizance of their Sin.

"And the Lord heard." No one utterance of all the myriads of voices in

His universe ever escapes His ear. There is a Divine Hearer of every human speech. This is clear from—

1. *His omnipresence.* See *Psa. cxxxix. 7-12.* He who is everywhere present sees all things, hears all things.

2. *His infinite intelligence.* He to whom all things are known cannot be ignorant of the evil speeches of men.

3. *His interest in His servants.* God is deeply concerned in the honour and welfare of His servants. Their reputation is a sacred thing in His sight. Therefore He notes all the evil which is spoken against them.

Let all evil speakers and slanderers ponder the solemn truth that every whisper is distinctly audible to the Divine ear.

III. The commendable conduct of Moses under the provocation of their sin.

1. *He was sorely tried.* Under any circumstances it is a severe trial to be reproached without cause, or to be falsely accused; but the trial of Moses was embittered by the source from whence it sprung. *Comp. Psa. lv. 12-15.*

2. *He bore his sore trial most nobly.* Under extreme provocation he main-

tained a saintly silence. He did not resent the attack made upon him, or attempt in any way to vindicate himself, for he was "meek and lowly in heart." "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." We have here a hint as to—(1) *The nature of meekness.* "Meekness," says Atter-soll, "is a gift of the Spirit, which moderateth anger and desire of revenge, forgiving offences and pardoning injuries for peace and quietness sake: so that albeit a man be provoked by injuries received, yet he doth not intend nor enterprize to requite it, but bridleth all hatred and impatience." (c) (2) *The occasions of its manifestation.* When we are injured personally, like Moses, we must be meek. But when the honour of God is impeached, like Moses in the matter of the golden calf (*Exod. xxxii. 19-29*), we must be zealous and determined. He was "as bold as a lion in the cause of God, but as mild as a lamb in his own cause."

Conclusion :

1. *In the conduct of Miriam and Aaron we have a beacon.* Let us shun their sin, &c.

2. *In the conduct of Moses we have a pattern.* Let us imitate his meekness.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Ambition threw Adam out of the garden of God: it quickly crept into the family of Christ, and infected his disciples, and, therefore, being a subtle and secret evil, it is to be looked unto that it steal not suddenly upon us. If any man ask what it is, I answer, It is an immoderate desire after dignity, it is a thirst that never can be quenched; for as the covetous person hath never enough money, so the ambitious hath never enough honour; it is a secret poison, a hidden plague, the mistress of craft, the mother of hypocrisy, the father of envy, the fountain of vices, the moth of piety, a blind guide and leader of the hearts of men; finally, we may say of the love of it as Paul doth of the love of money, "It is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10). The farther we think ourselves from it, the nearer commonly it cometh unto us; and, therefore, "let nothing be done through strife and vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. ii. 3).—*W. Attersoll.*

(b) Sweetness is lost if you pour in bitterness to it. And certainly, if otherwise you have many sweet qualities and virtues, if you have an ill tongue to speak against Moses, the bitterness of it will mar them all. The little bee hath but a little sting, and, therefore, the wound is not mortal that she can make; yet little as it is, it procureth usually her death if she be caught. So will your stinging tongue, assure yourself, kill you, although it little hurt him or her whom you have stung. The foul frog lieth all day in the mud and mire, at night putting up the head and croaking with a foul noise; and such foul creatures are they said to be that have croaking tongues against Moses. Put a swine into the sweetest garden you can make, and what will he do? Smell to the pleasant rose or any other delightful flower there? No; but straight he will fall to rooting, and with his foul mouth turn up both moor and mould of every good thing. Such foul swine are they said to be, that have foul tongues,

ever passing by that which is good, and rooting up the good names of them, whose virtues, how sweet soever to God and men, yet to them are ever hateful. I will go no further, but pray you to mark him that toppeth a candle, and taketh not good heed, doth he not usually black his fingers, and sometimes also burn them, although he make the candle more bright? So do such persons as will be meddling with their neighbours' lives. Well may their prattling make them burn and shine more bright, whom they meddle withal; but their own fingers carry a mark—nay, their souls receive such a blot as all the water in the sea will not wash off, but only the saving blood of Christ Jesus, upon repentance and amendment. Follow we not, then, Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses, but pray for His grace to guide our tongues in a holy course, and so, clean tongues being the outward tokens of our clean souls, our life shall be godly and our end happy.—*Bishop Babington.*

(c) All genuine meekness among men—all, I mean, which is more than mere easiness of disposition—may be defined to be that bearing of a man towards the things of time and of this world, which springs from having the heart broken by religious penitence, and the will put humbly into the hand of God. Do we call him "meek" who gives way in silence before noisy pretension, will rather give up

his due than wrangle for it, and is so far from pushing himself into foremost places, that he yields before the force or "importunity of earthly-minded" men, nor murmurs at the "usurpation of the unjust"? Is it not because his natural self-importance has been humbled into "poverty of spirit," that he is prepared thus to accept the lowest place? Or is it "meekness," as some older expositors defined it, to be "undesirous of revenge" (*non cupidus vindictæ*)—"not easily provoked," slow to take offence, and, though stung deep, betraying no personal bitterness, but hiding oneself beneath the wing of God, who is the promised "avenger of all such"? Surely he forbears and forgives best who knows by the depth of his contrition for personal guilt how deeply he has been forgiven. Or shall we say he is the "meek" man, who, resting in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of so much as God has been pleased to give, can meet each turn of fortune's wheel with an equal mind, quarrelling neither with injurious providence, nor with more successful rivals; in prosperity unassuming, undespending in adversity? Show me a will made pliable to the Heavenly Father under the experience of grace and forgiven sin, and I will show you equanimity above the philosophers—the equanimity of the Christian child! Yes, we must be converted to become meek.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

THE MODERN APPLICATION OF AN ANCIENT INCIDENT.

(Verses 1-3.)

The incident recorded in these verses warrants the following practical observations:—

I. The possession of the greatest gifts does not exempt men from the liability to meanness and sin.

Miriam, a prophetess and poet, and Aaron an eloquent man (Exod. iv. 14), in a measure inspired by God (Exod. iv. 15), and appointed by God the religious head of the nation (Exod. xxviii.), are here guilty of extreme meanness and great sin. The possession of great gifts does not necessarily involve the possession of great grace also. Balaam was a highly gifted man; but he was covetous, unprincipled, &c. A man may hold high office in the Church, and yet sin grievously. Let persons of great abilities and influence remember their great responsibilities. Let those who occupy prominent posi-

tions in religion look well to their own spiritual life and health. (*a*)

II. The most excellent and eminent servants of God are not exempt from the reproaches of men.

Even Moses, so distinguished for piety as he was, was spoken against.

"No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape; back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes: What king so
strong,

Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?"

Shakespeare.

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow
Thou shalt not escape calumny."—*Ibid.*

"The worthiest people are the most injured by slander," said Swift, "as we usually find that to be the best fruit which the birds have been pecking at." It was said of our Holy Lord, "He hath a devil and is mad." "If they called

the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household?" (b)

III. Our greatest trials sometimes arise from the most unlikely quarters.

It was remarkably so in the present trial of Moses. It arose from—

1. *Persons in eminent positions.* One would have thought that they would have sympathised with and endeavoured to sustain Moses in the duties and burdens of his office; but, &c.

2. *Persons of excellent character.* Aaron and Miriam were undoubtedly, in the main, good and worthy persons. Many of the trials of ministers and other religious leaders in our own day come from religious and well-meaning men; from their unreasonable complaints, their ignorant criticism, their concealed censures, &c.

3. *Persons in near relationship.* The present trial of Moses arose from his own brother and sister. David suffered sorely in this way from Absalom, Ahithophel, *et al.* Comp. *Psa.* xli. 9; *lv.* 12-14. When trials arise in this way they cause great *disappointment*. We expect such different things from kinsfolk and friends. They also cause sore

distress. They wound the tenderest feelings, &c.

IV. The Lord takes cognizance of the reproaches which are cast upon His servants.

When "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, . . . the Lord heard."

1. *He is perfectly acquainted with all things.* "The Lord is a God of knowledge." "His understanding is infinite." "God knoweth all things."

2. *He is deeply interested in all that concerns His servants.* This interest is set forth in most expressive forms in the Scriptures (*Deut.* xxxii. 9, 10; *Isa.* xlix. 15, 16; *Zech.* ii. 8). The reputation of His servants is sacred and precious in His sight.

V. The servants of the Lord do well in bearing patiently the reproaches which are cast upon them.

Moses did not attempt to vindicate himself against the reproaches of Miriam and Aaron. The good man in similar circumstances may well follow his example in this. If we are thoroughly devoted to God's service, we may safely leave it to Him to vindicate us against the reproaches of man. Comp. *Job* xvi. 19; *Psa.* xxxvii. 5-6. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Years ago Hamburg was nearly half of it burned down, and among the incidents that happened there was this one. A large house had connected with it a yard, in which there was a great black dog, and this black dog in the middle of the night barked and howled most furiously. It was only by his barking that the family were awakened just in time to escape from the flames, and their lives were spared; but the poor dog was chained to his kennel, and though he barked and thus saved the lives of others, he was burned himself. Oh! do not you, who work for God in this church, perish in that fashion. Do not permit your sins to enchain you, so that while you warn others you become lost yourselves. Do see that you have the godliness which has the promise of the life to come.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) I think there is no Christian, but sooner or later, first or last, shall have cause to say with David, "False witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not" (*Psa.* xxv. 11). They charged me with such things whereof I was both innocent and ignorant. It was the saying of one, that there

was nothing so intolerable as accusation, because there was no punishment ordained by law for accusers, as there was for thieves, although they stole friendship from men, which is the goodliest riches men have. Well, Christians, seeing it has been the lot of the dearest saints to be falsely accused, and to have their names and reputes in the world reproached, do you hold your peace, seeing it is no worse with you than it was with them, of whom this world was not worthy.—*Brooks.*

(c) The celebrated Boerhaave, who had many enemies, used to say that he never thought it necessary to repeat their calumnies. "They are sparks," said he, "which, if you do not blow them, will go out of themselves. The surest method against scandal is to live it down by perseverance in well-doing, and by prayer to God, that He would cure the distempered mind of those who traduce and injure us." It was a good remark of another, that "the malice of ill tongues cast upon a good man is only like a mouthful of smoke blown upon a diamond, which, though it clouds its beauty for the present, yet it is

easily rubbed off, and the gem restored, with little trouble to its own lustre."—*Dict. of Illust.*

Rowland Hill, when once scurrilously attacked in one of the public journals, was urged by a zealous friend to bring a legal action in defence; to this he replied with calm, unruffled dignity,—“I shall neither answer the libel, nor prosecute the writer, and that for

two reasons: first, because, in attempting the former, I should probably be betrayed into unbecoming violence of temper and expression, to my own grief, and the wounding of my friends; and in the next place, I have learned by experience, that no man's character can be eventually injured but by his own acts.”—*Gleanings.*

THE INQUEST OF THE LORD INTO THE SIN OF MIRIAM AND AARON.

(Verses 4-9.)

We now come to the second scene in this painful chapter of Israelitish history. Consider—

I. The solemn convocation.

“And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out,” &c. (verses 4, 5). We have here the solemn summons of the Divine Voice to Moses and to the two offenders, the majestic descent of the cloud of the Divine Presence, &c. Two great truths appear to be set forth in all this:

1. *The timeliness of the Divine interposition.* “The Lord spake suddenly.” His interposition was not delayed. In due season, at the earliest fitting opportunity, He appears for the vindication of His reproached servants.

2. *The righteousness of the Divine judgment.* This seems to be taught by the summoning of the offenders and of the person wronged before Him, and by the descent of the cloud of His presence. He knows all things, yet, He makes inquiry, &c. There is no haste in the Divine judgments; but patient and thorough examination precedes them. Comp. Gen. iii. 8-13; vi. 12; xi. 5; xviii. 21; Zeph. i. 12. (a)

The unimpeachable righteousness of the judgments of God should prove—

1. *A comfort to the upright when unjustly reproached.*

2. *A warning to the wicked.*

II. The splendid vindication.

“And he said, Hear now my words: If there is a prophet of Jehovah to you,” &c. (verses 6-8). Miriam and Aaron had aspired to equality with Moses, and disputed his claim to superior authority,

and now Jehovah splendidly vindicates his pre-eminent character, and privileges, and consequent authority. He asserts that Moses was—

1. *Pre-eminent in the intimacy of his communion with God.* In the revelations which God made to men there were different degrees of clearness. To prophets He spake in visions and dreams; He revealed His will to them in “the inner sphere of the soul-life.” But He spake to Moses “mouth to mouth,” *i.e.*, without any mediation or reserve, but with the same closeness and freedom with which friends converse together” (Exod. xxxiii. 11). He spake to Moses “as an appearance, and that not in enigmas,” *i.e.*, His communications were made to him directly and in the plainest and most intelligible manner. And of Moses He says further, “the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.” By “the similitude” we are not to understand the unveiled essence of the Deity (John i. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 16) nor any representation of God in the form of man or in the form of the angel of Jehovah (Ezek. i. 26-28; Dan. vii. 9, 13; Gen. xvi. 7). “It was the Deity Himself manifesting Himself so as to be cognizable to mortal eye.” Thus Moses was exalted far above all the other prophets. (See explanatory notes on verses 6-8.)

2. *Pre-eminent in his faithfulness in the charge which he received of the Lord.* “My servant Moses is approved in My whole house.” The “house” of Jehovah in this place does not signify the Tabernacle, but the covenant people, who were to be instructed and regulated by

Moses. In all his duties to the people of God, Moses is declared faithful; in all he was approved by God. "He said and did everything in the management of that great affair, as became an honest good man, that aimed at nothing else but the honour of God and welfare of Israel." How completely does the Lord vindicate His servant, and how highly does He honour him! Well does Trapp say, "God had never so much magnified Moses to them, but for their envy. We cannot devise to pleasure God's servants so much as by despising them. *Quisquis volens detrahit famæ meæ, nolens addit mercedi meæ*, saith Augustine; He that willingly detracteth from mine honour, doth, though against his will, add to my reward."

III. The unanswerable interrogation.

"Wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?" This inquiry implies that their speech against Moses was—

1. *Unreasonable*. "Wherefore, then," &c. Their reproaches were groundless. The Divine "Wherefore?" reveals the utter absence of any true cause for them.

2. *Profane*. "Were ye not afraid to speak against My servant?" In reproaching the servant, they had dishonoured the MASTER. "The rule is, *Injuria illata legato redundat in legattem*, Wrong done to a messenger reflects on him that sent him."

3. *Daring*. "Why were ye not afraid?" If they had considered, they would have discovered strong reasons to dread the

result of their conduct. "We have reason," says Matthew Henry, "to be afraid of saying or doing anything against the servants of God; it is at our peril if we do so, for God will plead their cause, and reckon that what 'touches them touches the apple of His eye.' It is a dangerous thing to 'offend one of Christ's little ones' (Matt. xviii. 6). Those are presumptuous, indeed, that 'are not afraid to speak evil of dignities' (2 Pet. ii. 10)." Interrogated thus by the Lord, Aaron and Miriam were "speechless," like the man at the marriage feast who had not on a wedding garment (Matt. xxii. 12). Their conduct was utterly indefensible.

IV. The Divine anger.

"And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He departed." There are here two considerations concerning the anger of the Lord:

1. *Its righteousness*. It was kindled by sin—the sin of Aaron and Miriam. The anger of God is a perfectly holy principle which hates and antagonises sin. (b)

2. *Its manifestation*. "And He departed." "The removal of God's presence from us," says Matthew Henry, "is the surest and saddest token of God's displeasure against us. Woe unto us if He depart; and He never departs till we by our sin and folly drive Him from us." "The final absence of God is hell itself." (c)

Conclusion:

The time approaches when God will summon all men to give account of themselves and their lives to Him. "Prepare to meet thy God."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There are many ways of representing perfect justice. The Thebans represented her as having neither hands nor eyes, for the judge should neither receive bribes nor respect persons. We, for similar reasons, picture her with a sword in one hand, scales in the other, and bandaged eyes. Whatever doubt there may be as to the justice of the earthly judge, as to that of the Heavenly there can be none. Now, His ways may sometimes appear to be "unequal." We see the wicked in prosperity and the righteous in adversity. Like David,

we are troubled at it. But when with David we "enter into the tabernacle of God, then understand we their end;" for God "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained."—*J. G. Pilkington*.

(b) There is a deep wrath-principle in God, as in all moral natures, that puts Him down upon wrong, and girds Him in avenging majesty for the infliction of suffering upon wrong. Just as we speak of our felt indignations, and tell how we are made to burn against

the person, or even the life of the wrong-doer, so God has His heavier indignations, and burns with His more consuming fire. This combustion of right anger is that girding power of justice that puts Him on the work of redress, and that armature of strength upon His feeling, that enables Him to inflict pain without shrinking.—*H. Bushnell, D.D.*

Say you that God is love? Oh! but look round this world. The aspect of things is stern—very stern. If they be ruled by love, it is a love which does not shrink from human agony. There is a law of infinite mercy here, but there is a law of boundless rigour, too. Sin, and you will suffer—that law is not reversed. The young, and the gentle, and the tender, are inexorably subjected to it. We would shield them if we could; but there is that which says they shall not be shielded.

They shall weep, and fade, and taste of mortal anguish, even as others. Carry that out into the next world, and you have "wrath to come."—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(c) Think of God sending a famine upon the soul—of minds pining and dying because Divine messages have been withdrawn! We know what the effect would be if God were to withhold the dew, or to trouble the air with a plague, or to avert the beams of the sun; the garden would be a desert, the fruitful field a sandy plain, the wind a bearer of death, summer a stormy night, and life itself a cruel variation of death, so penetrating, so boundless is the influence of God in nature. Is it conceivable that the withdrawal of God's influence would be less disastrous upon the spirit of man?—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

HONOUR TO MOSES; GREATER HONOUR TO CHRIST.

(Verse 7.)

We have an inspired comment in the New Testament on these words (Heb. iii. 1-6). Paul, reasoning with the Jews, tries to divert their minds from giving to Moses a glory that was in excess; and to show that all the honour they gave to Moses, the early servant, belonged in a far richer degree to Jesus, their rejected Lord. It is said that Moses, in all his offices, as priest, as prophet, as ruler, as teacher, as guide, was faithful in all his house.

What was his house? "Whose house," says the Apostle, "are we."

What does faithfulness mean? Whatever be the function assigned to you, that you honestly, impartially, earnestly, and fully discharge. Moses was in the midst of the people of God faithful. He finished the tabernacle; and you remember how specific are the injunctions laid down, and how minutely Moses fulfilled them all. So Jesus, the antitype, dimly foreshadowed by Moses, has been faithful in all the arrangements of His house. He has furnished it with precious sacraments; He has appointed it a teaching and a preaching ministry; He has redeemed it by His precious blood; He has bequeathed to it the ceaseless presence of His Holy Spirit, &c.

The Apostle justly says, that this

Moses, who was faithful in all his house, is counted worthy of glory; though One is counted worthy of greater glory. The very comparison indicates that Moses was counted worthy of honour. We need not disparage the servant in order to exalt the Master. Moses was a servant in the house; as a servant to be honoured; Jesus, the Builder of the house, as the Builder of the house to have the great and the lasting glory. Comp. John v. 23.

We see what is the *true definition of the Church*. The definition of Scripture of the Church is not the size of an edifice, or the splendour of its architecture; but the regenerated men that meet together in the name of Christ, &c. The orator may collect a crowd, but that is not a Church. The architect may build a cathedral, but that is not a Church. It is living stones, knit together by living love, not dead stones fastened together by dead mortar, that constitute a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see also the *true oneness of the Church of Christ in all ages*. There was, says the Apostle, but one house. "Moses was faithful in all his house; . . . whose house," says the Apostle, "are we." Then the Church that was in the days of Moses is the Church that

exists now. There never has been but one Church; there never has been but one religion—I mean true religion; there never has been but one Saviour. The formula has differed, the circumstances have varied, the degree of spirituality or conformity to Christ has differed; but the substance has been everywhere and always essentially the same.

Now the argument of the Apostle (Heb. iii. 1-6) is most logical; a building infers and suggests a builder; an effect throws you back upon a cause; a creation leads you back or upwards to a Creator; and if Christ be the builder of all, and peculiarly the builder of that edifice of living stones which is called the Church; to build which requires more of God than to build the universe; then, says the Apostle, of how great honour ought He to be the inheritor who is thus God, the Builder and the Maker of all? If it required God to make a world; it requires God to regenerate sinners; nay, if possible more so. Omnipotence has but to mould the obedient dust into all its forms of beauty, of symmetry and order; and no resisting element, from first to last, will intrude to disturb the perfection, or to mar the beauty of the product. But in dealing with sinners there is not simply dead material to be moulded into its varied forms of loveliness and symmetry, but resistant passions, rebellious feelings, reluctant

appetites, diverging tendencies; a thousand things to obstruct, to resist and to mar. And hence, if it required God to build the outer world, it requires no less a God to build that inner house, &c. Now then, argues the Apostle, if the servant Moses is counted by every Jew worthy of honour, what languages shall express the honour due to Him who built all things? Comp. Heb. i. And thus he shows that Christ is superior to Moses; that He is superior to angels; he proves by comparison that he is God; and therefore, that the glory, and the honour, and the thanksgiving, and the praise are exclusively due to Him, who redeemed us by His blood, and has made us what we are.

We infer from the whole—

1. The greater glory of the New Testament economy. The figures are removed because their reality has come.

2. The greater responsibility of all who live under so clear, so simple, so spiritual an economy. Comp. Heb. x. 28, 29.

3. Paul shows us also the secret of our safety (Heb. iii. 6).

4. If Christ was faithful in His house, and Moses faithful in his, let us be faithful in ours (Matt. xxiv. 45-50).

Are we living stones, laid upon Christ the rock?—*Arranged from "Sabbath Morning Readings," by John Cumming, D.D.*

THE PUNISHMENT OF MIRIAM AND AARON.

(Verses 10-16.)

Consider:

I. The Divine judgment because of the sin of Miriam and Aaron.

"And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous," &c. (ver. 10).

1. *The punishment was inflicted by the Lord.* "Leprosy," says Archbishop Trench, "was often the punishment of sins committed against the Divine government. Miriam, Gehazi, Uzziah, are all cases in point; and when Moses

says to the people, 'Take heed of the plague of leprosy' (Deut. xxiv. 8), this is no admonition diligently to observe the laws about leprosy, but a warning lest any disobedience of theirs should provoke God to visit them with this plague. The Jews themselves called it 'the finger of God,' and emphatically, 'the stroke.' It attacked, they said, first a man's house; and then, if he refused to turn, his clothing; and lastly, should he persist in sin, himself:—a

fine parable, let the fact have been as it might, of the manner in which God's judgments, if a man refuse to listen to them, reach ever nearer to the centre of his life. So, too, they said that a man's true repentance was the one condition of his leprosy leaving him." The leprosy of Miriam was certainly "the stroke" of Divine punishment because of her sin.

2. *The punishment was appropriate to the sin.* "Her foul tongue," says Bishop Hall, "is justly punished with a foul face, and her folly in pretending to be a rival with Moses is made manifest to all men, for every one sees his face to be glorious, and hers to be leprous. While Moses needs a veil to hide his glory, Miriam needs one to hide her shame." Not content with her exalted position, she aspired to the highest place of all, and for seven days she was not allowed even the lowest place in the camp, but was completely exiled from it.

3. *The punishment fell most severely upon Miriam.* Aaron was not struck with leprosy. (1) She was the instigator of the sin. The Lord visits her greater guilt with a severer punishment. (2) Aaron's office of High Priest also probably helped to shield him. Had he been smitten with leprosy he would have been deeply disgraced in the eyes of the people, and his holy office would probably have been brought into disesteem amongst them. (3) Yet Aaron was not altogether exempted from punishment. As priest he had to examine Miriam and pronounce her leprous. Again he had to examine her and pronounce her clean before she was readmitted to the camp. That he deeply realized his painful position is evident from the narrative (verses 10-12). Let us remember that there is judgment with God. He punishes men for their sins. If His chosen and distinguished servants sin against Him, He "will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

(a)

II. The Divine judgment leading to personal humiliation.

"And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas! my lord, I beseech thee," &c. (verses 11, 12). We see here—

1. *Humble acknowledgment to Moses.* A short time since Aaron had spoken against Moses; but mark the humility with which he now approaches him, and the respect with which he now addresses him—"Alas! my lord, I beseech thee," &c. When the Lord takes up the cause of His servants He speedily humbles their detractors.

2. *Confession of sin.* "Lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." Though he was not himself smitten with leprosy, yet Aaron deeply feels and penitently acknowledges his sin.

3. *Entreaty for the removal of the severe judgment from Miriam.* "Let her not be as one dead," &c. "Leprosy," says Archbishop Trench, "was nothing short of a living death, a corrupting of all the humours, a poisoning of the very springs, of life; a dissolution little by little of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. Aaron exactly describes the appearance which the leper presented to the eyes of the beholders, when, pleading for Miriam, he says, 'Let her not be as one dead, of whom,'" &c. Thus he invokes the aid of Moses in intercession for the removal of the dreadful punishment. How speedily God by His judgments can humble men! Even the greatest and the mightiest are utterly unable to sustain His strokes.

III. The remarkable acknowledgment of the eminence of Moses, the servant of the Lord.

In Aaron's confession and appeal to Moses we have a splendid tribute to the character and power with God of the latter.

1. *In the manner in which he was addressed by Aaron.* "And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas! my lord, I beseech thee," &c.

2. *In the appeal which was made to him by Aaron.* "Let her not be as one dead," &c. This appeal implies on the part of Aaron—(1) Faith in the

magnanimity of Moses—that he would not retaliate upon them for their attack upon him ; that he was forgiving and generous. (2) Faith in the influence which Moses had with God. Aaron does not dare to present his prayer directly to God, but he seeks the mediation and intercession of Moses. Thus out of the evil speaking of Aaron and Miriam against Moses, God brings a splendid tribute to the magnanimity, the holiness, and the spiritual power of His servant. Men in prosperity may reproach the servants of the Lord, but in adversity they will eagerly seek their sympathies and services.

IV. The distinguished magnanimity and grace of Moses.

“And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.” There was no resentment in his heart towards the brother and sister who had injured him ; but fullest forgiveness for both, and sincerest pity for his smitten sister. His prayer for Miriam is an anticipation of the precept of our Lord, “Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. v. 44). We have another beautiful example of this forgiving and gracious spirit in the “man of God out of Judah,” who prayed that the withered hand of Jeroboam, which had been stretched out against him, might be healed (1 Kings xiii. 1-6). This spirit found its supreme and perfect expression in the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who crucified Him, when He was enduring the anguish of the cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do” (Luke xxiii. 34). Let us imitate Him.

V. The great power of the intercession of good.

In answer to the prayer of Moses Miriam was healed of her leprosy, and, after an exclusion lasting seven days, was restored to her place in the camp and congregation of the Lord. “Pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (b)

VI. The justice and mercy of God as manifested in His treatment of Miriam.

1. *He manifests His justice.* To mark His abhorrence of her sin He commands that Miriam shall be shut out of the camp seven days. “To deal lightly with sin is actually to commit sin.” God punishes sin in whomsoever He finds it. “There is no respect of persons with God in punishing, for none shall escape His hand. He doth not strike the poor and spare the rich ; wink at the noble and honourable, and strike down the unnable and baser sort ; but He respecteth every one as He findeth him, and punisheth sin wheresoever sin reigneth, that all should fear.”

2. *He manifests His mercy.* He does not deal with Miriam and Aaron as they deserve, but mingles His judgment with mercy. We see His mercy in healing Miriam, and in sentencing her to only seven days banishment from the camp. He does not execute the fierceness of His anger. In wrath He remembers mercy. “He delighteth in mercy.” (c)

VII. The sin of one person checking the progress of an entire nation.

“The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in.” For seven days the advance of the entire people was arrested by reason of the sin of Miriam. In consequence of the sin of Achan the Israelites were smitten at the battle of Ai, and ignominiously defeated. How often have we seen since those days the current of the progress of a nation, or of nations, arrested and turned back by some unprincipled and ambitious monarch, or by some unrighteous and powerful statesman ! “None of us liveth to himself.” The sin of one person of high position and great influence may result in deepest injury to thousands.

Conclusion :

The history supplies materials for a strong argument against sinning. By the heinousness of sin, by the Divine judgment upon sin, and by the injury which sin inflicts upon others, we are urged to “abstain from every form of evil.”

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Let us all learn this fact—that the consequences of sin are inevitable; in fact, that punishment is the extreme consequence of sin going on unchecked. There is in human nature an element of the gambler. There is a willingness to take the chances of things—a willingness to run a risk, however uncertain. There is no such element here. The punishment of sin is certain. All Scripture tells us so. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” “Be sure your sin will find you out.” “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.” “The way of transgressors is hard.” All the world’s proverbs tell us so. “A reckless youth: rueful age.” “As he has made his bed, so he must lie in it.” “He who will not be ruled by the rudder, must be ruled by the rock.” Even Satan himself tells us so. In the old legend of Dr. Faustus, when he bids the devil lay aside his propensity for lying, and tell the truth, the devil answers, “The world does me injustice to tax me with lies. Let me ask their own conscience if I have ever deceived a single man into believing that a bad deed was a good one.” Even wicked men admit it. . . . God is no respecter of persons.

Fire burns and water drowns, whether the sufferer be a worthless villain or whether it be a fair and gentle child. And so the moral law works, whether the sinner be a David or a Judas, whether he be a publican or a priest. In the physical world there is no forgiveness of sins. Sin and punishment, as Plato said, walk this world with their hands tied together, and the rivet by which they are linked is as a link of adamant. A writer has said that a man who cannot swim might as well walk into a river and hope that it is not a river, and will not drown, as a man, seeing judgment and not mercy, denounced upon willing sin, hope that it will turn out to be mercy, and not judgment, and so defy God’s law. Will he escape? No. He who chooses sin must meet with retribution; must experience in his own individual person the *lex talionis* of offended nature—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.—*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*

(b) I wish we did believe in prayer: I am afraid most of us do not. People will say, “What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Müller’s prayers!” But is it not a sad thing that we should think it wonderful for God to hear prayer? We are come to a pretty pass certainly when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh, who had attended the prayer-meetings, and at last said to his teacher who conducted the prayer-meeting, “Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible; she never reads it.” “Why, Johnny, should

your sister read the Bible?” “Because if she once could read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved.” “Do you think so, Johnny?” “Yes, I do, sir, and I wish the next time there’s a prayer-meeting you would ask the people to pray for my sister, that she may begin to read the Bible.” “Well, well, it shall be done, John.” So the teacher gave out that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister might begin to read the Bible. John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, “John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the prayer-meeting and go out. You ought not to have done it.” “Oh! sir,” said the boy, “I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister read her Bible for the first time.” That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer. The girl was reading the Bible when the boy went home. God had been pleased to hear the prayer; and if we could but trust God after that fashion we should often see similar things accomplished.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Frail art thou, O man, as a bubble on the breaker,
Weak, and governed by externals, like a poor
bird caught in the storm;
Yet thy momentary breath can still the raging
waters,
Thy hand can touch a lever that may move
the world.
O Merciful! we strike eternal covenant with
Thee,
For man may take for his ally the King who
ruleth kings;
How strong, yet how most weak, in utter
poverty how rich,
What possible omnipotence to good is dormant
in a man;
Prayer is a creature’s strength, his very breath
and being;
Prayer is the golden key which can open the
wicket of mercy;
Prayer is the magical sound that saith to Fate,
So be it;
Prayer is the slender nerve that moveth the
muscles of Omnipotence.—*M. F. Tupper.*

(c) Mercy is God’s Benjamin, and He delighteth most of all in it. It is the son of His right hand, though, alas! in bringing it forth, it might well have been called the son of sorrow, too, for mercy came into this world through the sorrows of the only-begotten Son of God. He delights in mercy, just as some men delight in trade, some in the arts, some in professions; and each man, according to his delight, becomes proficient in pursuing a

work for the very love thereof. So God is proficient in mercy. He addicts Himself to it. He is most God-like, most happy, if such a thing may be said of Him, when He is

stretching out His right hand with his golden sceptre in it, and saying to the guilty, "Come to Me, touch this sceptre, and you shall live." —C. H. Spurgeon.

MIRIAM SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY : TRANSFIGURATION THROUGH TRANSGRESSION.

(Verse 10.)

I. This transfiguration was brought to pass on account of the jealousy of Miriam of Moses, and the jealousy of God for Moses.

"Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?" (ver. 2). "Were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (ver. 8).

Thoughts that contain the venom of jealousy, when expressed, form the character and pass judgment upon it. (Comp. Matt. xii. 37.) Miriam's jealousy of her brother came out in her speech, and her speech brought miraculous judgment upon her. God was jealous of the honour of His servant, and His jealousy manifested itself in words of reproof. So a righteous and sinful jealousy led to this transforming judgment. God's words justified Him; Miriam's condemned her.

II. The transformation was in keeping with the expressed jealousy of God and of Miriam.

The narrative leads us to think that Miriam's feelings broke forth like sudden fire. While she was "musing, the fire burned," and she spake bitter and angry words. And we are told that the Lord likewise spake suddenly (ver. 4) in words of authority and reproof. And the punishment came suddenly. "The cloud departed, and behold Miriam became leprous." So, we are told, shall "the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 27). The indignation of the Lord was great, the bitter feeling of Miriam was intense, and the disease which was the consequence of both was of the most malignant kind.

LESSONS.

I. That inequalities of position in the Church of God have their origin in the will of God. Vessels belonging to the same owner vary in the amount of cargo they carry because they vary in their capacity. One is 1,000 tons burthen, another 500, and so on. But why do they differ in tonnage? This must be referred to the will of the owner who built each one. The forest trees are all free to grow, but the willow cannot attain to the dimensions of the oak, or the ash to the strength of the cedar of Lebanon. It has not been given to them to do so. So there are intellectual inequalities among God's servants (Comp. Matt. xxv. 15). Why not give to each one the same number of talents? Why does not the ship-builder build each vessel of the same size? or the Creator make each tree

exactly like its fellow? Because they are destined for different service, and this destiny must be referred to the will of their owners. Neither Miriam nor Aaron could grow into a Moses.

II. That God is, from a *blessed necessity*, a respecter of persons in relation to *character*.

Some of God's children command more affection and respect than others, because they deserve more. We find ourselves under the necessity of esteeming some more highly than others, and God is, so to speak, under the same blessed necessity. He did esteem Moses more highly than He esteemed Aaron or Miriam, and the reason is found, not in his mental superiority, but because he "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (ver. 3).

III. That the abstract devil of jealousy *within* the Church of God hinders its progress more than a legion of personal devils *without*. "The people journeyed not," &c., (ver. 15). When leaders of an army become jealous of each other's reputation, they let loose an enemy which will soon take the wheels off the artillery, and ham-string the horses; and the same devil in the Church of God has often made the chariot wheels go heavily.

IV. The practice and precept of the

New Testament were anticipated by some Old Testament saints. The river at its well-head may be narrow, but the water is the same in quality as it is when it flows into the ocean. The channel was not so broad, but the spirit was the same. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" (ver. 13), anticipates Acts vii. 60; Luke xxiii. 34; Matt. v. 44.—*From "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament."*

THE PRAYER OF MOSES FOR MIRIAM.

(Verses 13-15.)

A man's foes too often are those of his own house. The sister and brother of Moses spake against him; his marriage displeased them; their resentment led them beyond the mere expression of discontent; they question his authority, envy his power, are jealous of his position. They have much influence—the one a prophetess, the other a high priest. But for Divine interposition the whole of Israel might have been led to revolt against Moses' authority. "The Lord heard it." They are summoned to His presence. He applauds Moses; Miriam becomes a leper; Aaron also was punished. *For the lips that sinned with Miriam must pronounce her leprous.* And now Moses turns to God, and prays for Miriam's recovery.

I. The prayer. How conclusively does it attest the excellency of the character of Moses! How worthy of power is one so large-hearted and forgiving! How much of resemblance is there between the behaviour of Moses and the law of Christ! "Pray for them which despitefully use you."

1. *The prayer was explicit.* Nothing vague. He prays not for wrong-doers in the mass, but for one in particular, and that one who had wronged him. Many will pray general prayers heartily enough. Lips willing to say, "Have mercy on us miserable sinners," refuse to say, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

2. *The prayer was earnest.* "I beseech Thee." Did he see the Shekinah receding (ver. 10), and would have God return at once? God's withdrawals excite prayer.

3. *The prayer was generous.* "Heal her now." Not make her penitent, or cause her to beg forgiveness, and then heal her, or remove the disease after a certain time, but, "Heal her now." This is how *true brothers* always pray. Sympathy produces generosity and earnestness.

4. *The prayer was well-timed.* He waited not till the memory of her sin and his wrong were fainter; at once his cry goes up, as Miriam's departing foot-fall is heard. "Love one another." We are not to "give place unto wrath." *He gives PLACE who gives TIME.*

II. The answer. ver. 14.

1. *It was most gracious.* He condescended to return and speak to Moses. Intimates she shall be healed at the expiration of seven days.

2. *It was most wise.* Seven days she must suffer for her own good, for Aaron's good, for all Israel's good, to show that an exalted position in His service does not exempt from the punishment of sin.

3. *It was most speedy.* He answered at once. Why so speedy? Because He desired the innocent should not be afflicted with the guilty. Read ver. 14, how God sets forth the

case to Moses, so that he, seeing the wisdom of the punishment, and God's grace in curtailing it, may be at rest.

Think, brethren, of the Miriams

without the camp, think of the time when, timbrel in hand, they joined with you; now kneel with Moses to pray, "Heal them now, O God."—*R. A. Griffin.*

CHAPTER XIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verses 1, 2. *And the Lord spake unto Moses, &c.*

It appears from Deut. i. 22, 23, that the sending of the spies to search out the land was suggested by the people and approved by Moses; and here it is permitted by the Lord. God had commanded them to go and take possession of the land; and the motion to send the spies was an expression of their unbelief.

Everyone a ruler among them. By a comparison of the names of these "rulers" with those of "the princes of the tribes" (chap. i. 5-16), we see that they were not the same in any one case. These now sent forth were doubtless selected from the chiefs of each tribe for their fitness for the work entrusted to them. In verse 3 they are spoken of as "heads of the children of Israel;" *i.e.*, heads of families.

Verse 16. *And Moses called Oshea . . . Jehoshua.* Oshea, Hoshea, or Hosea signifies help or deliverance. To this Moses added a syllable of the sacred Name, and made it Jehoshua, contracted into Joshua, which signifies Jehovah is help, or deliverance; or, "whose help is Jehovah." This verse does not imply that the alteration in the name was made at this time. It was probably made at the time of, and in consequence of his victory over the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8-16).

Verse 17. *Get you up this way southward.* Or, "Get you up there in the south country." *The Negeb* (south country) primarily signifies a dry, parched district, from *nagab*, to be dried up, to be withered. This name was applied to the southern and least fertile district of Canaan, which "ex-

tended northward from Kadesh to within a few miles of Hebron, and from the Dead Sea westward to the Mediterranean (cf. especially Josh. xv. 21-32)."

And go up into the mountain. The hill-country of Palestine, including the mountains of Judah and Ephraim or Israel. The expressions "the south country" and "the mountain" seem intended to set forth the whole land of Canaan.

Verse 19. *In tents, or camps, i.e.*, in open or unwall'd villages.

Verse 20. *The time of the first-ripe grapes.* The first grapes ripen in Palestine as early as August, and sometimes even in July; and the vintage takes place in September and October. It appears to us most probable that the spies were despatched early in August. Dr. Kitto, however, conjectures that "probably they set out early in September, and returned about the middle of October."

Verse 21. *The wilderness of Zin.* The north-eastern portion of the great desert of Paran, and part of the southern border of the Promised Land (chap. xxxiv. 4; Josh. xv. 1-3). (See notes on "The wilderness of Paran," chap. xii. 16).

Rehob as men come to Hamath, or "at the entrance of Hamath," i.e., at the commencement of the territory of that name, on the northern boundary of Canaan. Rehob was probably the Bethrehob of Judg. xviii. 28, near to Dan-Laish, the modern *Tell el Kady*.

Hamath, the principal city of Upper Syria, from the time of the Exodus to that of the prophet Amos. It is situated on the Orontes. Antiochus

Epiphanes changed its name to Epiphaneia. Hamah is its present name.

The spies went through the whole land from the southern to the northern frontier.

Verse 22. *Came unto Hebron.* Hebron signifies an associate or friend. A most ancient city, situated amongst the mountains (Josh. xx. 7), 20 Roman miles south of Jerusalem, and the same distance north of Beersheba. It was a well known place when Abram entered Canaan about 3800 years ago (Gen. xiii. 18). Trapp points out that at Hebron "lay buried those three reverend couples: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah (Gen. xlix. 31). Here David began his reign over Israel (2 Sam. ii. 1), and hither came Mary to visit Elizabeth (Luke i. 39)."

The original name of Hebron was Kirjath-Arba, the city of Arba, so called from Arba, the father of Anak and progenitor of the Anakim (Josh. xv. 13, 14; xxi. 11).

Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak. Probably the names not of individuals, but of tribes of Anakim; for we meet with them again fifty years or more after this time (Josh. xv. 14).

Anak, the name of the ancestor of the Anakim, signifies long-necked.

Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. "Some think," says Dr. A. Clarke, "it was to humble the pride of the Egyptians, who boasted the highest antiquity, that this note concerning the higher antiquity of Hebron was introduced by Moses."

Zoan, an ancient city situated near the eastern border of Lower Egypt, and called by the Greeks and Romans Tanis. At the time of the Exodus the Pharaoh dwelt at Zoan (Psa. lxxviii. 43).

Verse 23. *The brook of Eshcol, or, The valley of the cluster, or bunch; a fertile wady,* probably about two miles north of Hebron, where the largest and best grapes in the whole of Palestine are grown, besides apricots, figs, pomegranates, &c., in abundance.

One cluster of grapes and they bare it, &c. Not simply because of the size of the cluster did they carry it in this way, but chiefly to prevent its being bruised. Clusters of grapes of great size are found in Palestine. "Pliny mentions," says Dr. A. Clarke, "bunches of grapes in Africa each of which was larger than an infant. Paul Lucas mentions some bunches which he saw at Damascus that weighed above forty-five pounds. I myself once cut down a bunch of grapes nearly twenty pounds in weight. Those who live in cold climates can scarcely have any conception to what perfection both grapes and other fruits grow in climates that are warm, and where the soil is suitable to them."

Verse 26. *Kadesh* signifies the Holy Place or Sanctuary. Great uncertainty exists as to the situation of Kadesh. Dr. Robinson identified it with Ain el-Weibeh, on the western side of the Arabah; and this identification has been generally accepted by English geographers as the most probable. Dean Stanley (*Sinai and Pal.*, pp. 93-96) identifies Kadesh with Petra. But Petra was in the heart of Edom, while Kadesh is said to be "in the uttermost border" of that land (chap. xx. 16). And in chap. xxxiii. 37 an encampment at Mount Hor is mentioned as quite distinct from the encampment at Kadesh, and Mount Hor is situated close to Edom. Moreover, in chap. xxxiv. 4, and Josh. xv. 3, Kadesh is reckoned as part of the land of Canaan. Keil and Del. are of the opinion that "the name Kadesh embraces a large district of the desert of Zin, and is not confined to one particular spot." The conclusion of Mr. Hayman (Smith's *Bible Dict.*, arts. "Kadesh" and "Wilderness of the Wandering") seems to us satisfactory: "It seems that Kadesh probably means, firstly, a region of the desert spoken of as having a relation, sometimes with the wilderness of Paran, and sometimes with that of Zin (comp. vers. 21, 26); and secondly, a distinct city within that desert limit."

Ver. 32. *A land that eateth up the*
229

inhabitants thereof does not mean "that it was so barren and unfruitful that it did not produce food sufficient for the inhabitants of it." Keil and Del. give what we regard as the correct interpre-

tation: "The land was an apple of discord, because of its fruitfulness and situation; and as the different nations strove for its possession, its inhabitants wasted away."

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE SPIES.

(Verses 1-20.)

The people have now arrived at the border of the Promised Land; and there seems to be no reason why they may not, if they will, speedily enter and take possession of it. But instead of this, they propose to send spies into the land to investigate it, and bring back a report to them. The results of this in the subsequent history were both great and disastrous.

Consider:—

I. The Origin of this Expedition.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, send thou men," &c. (vers. 1, 2). But we find, from the history as given in Deut. i. 20-25, that the proposal to search the land originated with the people themselves, and was an expression of their unbelief, and, at the least, a failure to render prompt obedience to the command of the Lord. Let us see how the case stood at this time. (1) God had Himself declared to them the excellence of the land (Exod. iii. 8; xxxiii. 3). (2) He had promised to guide them to the land (Exod. xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 2, 14). Moreover, He was visibly present with them in the mysterious and majestic pillar of cloud and fire. (3) He had promised to drive out the heathen nations and give them possession of the land (Exod. xxiii. 20-33; Deut. i. 8). (4) He commanded them to "go up and possess" the land (Deut. i. 8, 21). (5) Yet their answer was, "We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land," &c. (Deut. i. 22). Clearly their duty was not to send men to search out the land, but trusting in God, to obey His voice and go and take possession of the land. Their proposition involved a sinful distrust of the presence of God with them and of His

promises to them; it also involved a failure in their obedience to Him. Moses did not suspect the unbelief which had suggested their proposal; and approving it himself, he asked counsel of the Lord, who permitted it. God may allow us to carry out our unbelieving plans to our own confusion. If we will "lean unto our own understanding," He will let us take our way until we find what utter folly our fancied wisdom is. (a). In this way in after years when they demanded a king, God directed Samuel to "hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (1 Sam. viii. 5-22). Our business is not to suggest alterations in or additions to the Divine plans, but heartily to trust and promptly to obey the Divine Word.

II. The Agents in this Expedition.

"Of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them," &c. (vers. 2-16). Three points here require notice:

1. *The wisdom of this arrangement.*

(1) In sending one man from each tribe. By this arrangement every tribe was represented, and would have a witness of its own. (2) In sending a leading man from each tribe. They were approved men, men of influence, and therefore their testimony would be the more likely to be received and credited.

2. *The scarcity of worthy leaders.*

We see here that a large proportion of even these leading men, these "rulers" and "heads of the children of Israel," were inferior men and unworthy of the position which they occupied. Here are the names of twelve men, and ten of them seem to have been feeble and common-place men, and (as we shall

hereafter see) deficient in faith, in enterprise, and in courage. How many of the world's heroes and leaders are mentally weak and morally inferior, or even corrupt men! The true hero and the worthy leader often fail of recognition except by a superior few. Hitherto in the world's history the majority of the leaders of men have been feeble and cowardly, and very often base and corrupt. (b)

3. *The diversity of human fame.* The names of these twelve men have been handed down from generation to generation, and at the present time the record which contains them is to be found throughout the whole of the known world; but how different are the positions which they occupy! Two of them, Joshua and Caleb, are in the foremost rank of saints and heroes: while the other ten are known as the chief agents in arresting the progress of the nation for more than thirty-eight years. History perpetuates the memory of Nero as well as of St. Paul, of Judas Iscariot as well as of Jesus Christ. We are making our posthumous reputation now; let us take heed that it be of a worthy character. (c)

III. The Aims of this Expedition.

"And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up," &c. (vers. 17-20). They were to examine and report as to the condition of—

1. *The land*, whether it was fertile or barren, whether it was wooded or bare, &c.

2. *The towns*, whether they were walled and fortified or open and unprotected, &c.

3. *The people*, whether they were strong or weak, whether they were few or many, &c.

Their investigation was to be *thorough*. "Get you up there in the south country, and go up into the mountain." They were to search the whole land of Canaan. Partial investigations are apt to prove misleading.

Their report was to be *verified*. "And bring of the fruit of the land." They were charged to bring of the fruit as a confirmation of their testimony.

IV. The Spirit appropriate to this Expedition.

"And be ye of good courage." The mission with which they were entrusted would require firm and fearless hearts; for if the object of their journey had been discovered by the Canaanites, it would have fared ill with them. They needed courage, too, in order that they might view things hopefully, and bring back an inspiring report. Want of courage in its leaders is a sore hindrance and calamity to any people. The courage they needed could spring only from faith in God, and could be sustained only by faith in Him. Faith in Him is the soul of all true heroism. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A man sets his mind on standing on some high place; he points to a pillar and says that if he could ascend to its summit he would see from that lofty elevation glimpses of heaven, and he determines that he will stand upon that summit, whatever hazards he may incur. At length God grants him his request, and when the man has ascended to the eminence which he coveted, what does he find? Sand, sand, sand! Mile on mile of sand—sand for mile on mile! And now he wishes to descend; but how to get down is his great difficulty. There may be no way down but that which involves suicide. Yet the man was determined to reach that elevation; nothing could stand between him and his wish; he urged God to grant him his request; with importunate desire he besought

that he might have his way; and there is no punishment heavier than that which falls upon any man when God allows him to take his own course.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) The servile imitancy of mankind might be illustrated under the figure, itself nowise original, of a Flock of Sheep. Sheep go in flocks for three reasons: First, because they are of a gregarious temper, and love to be together: Secondly, because of their cowardice; they are afraid to be left alone: Thirdly, because the common run of them are dull of sight, to a proverb, and can have no choice in roads; sheep can in fact see nothing; in a celestial Luminary, and a scoured pewter Tankard, they would discern only that both dazzled them, and were of unspeakable glory. How like their fellow-creatures of the human

species! Men, too, are gregarious; then surely faint-hearted enough, trembling to be left by themselves; above all, dull-sighted, down to the verge of utter blindness. Thus are we seen ever running in torrents, and mobs, if we run at all; and after what foolish scoured Tankards, mistaking them for Suns! Foolish Turnip-lanterns likewise, to all appearance supernatural, keep whole nations quaking, their hair on end. Neither know we, except by blind habit, where the good pastures lie: solely when the sweet grass is between our teeth, we know it, and chew it; also when grass is bitter and scant, we know it,—and bleat and butt: these last two facts we know of a truth and in very deed. Thus do Men and Sheep play their parts on this nether Earth; wandering restlessly in large masses, they know not whither; for most part, each following his neighbour, and his own nose.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

(c) Posthumous influence invests life with enhanced dignity. While Bunyan lived he was but as a mustard-seed; now he is as a great cathedral tree, in which ten thousand voices are lifted up in laudatory and grateful song! "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." No living man is complete. While your heart beats you are undergoing a process. Time will mellow you; age will tone your character. Do not urge society to give you a verdict just now. Society is too heated and confused to pronounce upon you with the accuracy of deliberation and the dignity of repose. Death will befriend you. A most solemn and righteous estimation of character is often introduced by death. The green hillock in the yard of the dead is a judgment-seat which might appal an unjust judge. Your appeal, then, under all misapprehension and misrepresentation, must be to the new hours which Time has yet to strike from her bell, and which shall chime out many a reversal of condemnation, and many a fulfilment of expectation long deferred.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) The courage that can go forth, once and away, to Chalk-Farm, and have itself shot, and snuffed out, with decency, is nowise wholly what we mean here. Such courage we indeed esteem an exceeding small matter; capable of co-existing with a life full of falsehood, feebleness, poltroonery, and despicability. Nay, oftener it is cowardice rather that produces the result: for consider, Is the Chalk-Farm

pistoleer inspired with any reasonable Belief and Determination; or is he hounded on by haggard indefinable Fear,—how he will be cut at public places, and "plucked geese of the neighbourhood" will wag their tongues at him a plucked goose? If he go, then, and be shot without shrieking or audible uproar, it is well for him: nevertheless there is nothing amazing in it. Courage to manage all this has not perhaps been denied to any man, or to any woman. Thus, do not recruiting sergeants drum through the streets of manufacturing towns, and collect ragged losels enough; every one of whom, if once dressed in red, and trained a little, will receive fire cheerfully for the small sum of one shilling *per diem*, and have the soul blown out of him at last, with perfect propriety. The Courage that dares only die, is on the whole no sublime affair; necessary, indeed, yet universal; pitiful when it begins to parade itself. On this Globe of ours, there are some thirty-six persons that manifest it, seldom with the smallest failure, during every second of time. Nay, look at Newgate: do not the offscourings of creation, when condemned to the gallows as if they were not men but vermin, walk thither with decency, and even to the scowls and hootings of the whole universe give their stern good-night in silence? What is to be undergone only once, we may undergo; what must be, comes almost of its own accord. Considered as Duellist, what a poor figure does the fiercest Irish Whiskerando make, compared with any English Game-cock, such as you may buy for fifteen pence!

The Courage we desire and prize is not the courage to die decently, but to live manfully. This, when by God's grace it has been given, lies deep in the soul; like genial heat, fosters all other virtues and gifts; without it they could not live. In spite of our innumerable Waterloos and Peterloos, and such campaigning as there has been, this Courage we allude to, and call the only true one, is perhaps rarer in these last ages, than it has been in any other since the Saxon Invasion under Hengist. Altogether extinct it can never be among men; otherwise the species Man were no longer for this world: here and there, in all times, under various guises, men are sent hither not only to demonstrate but exhibit it, and testify, as from heart to heart, that it is still possible, still practicable.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

GLIMPSES OF THE BETTER LAND.

(Verses 1, 2.)

I. The search.

II. The retreat.

III. An emblem of God's dealings with His people.

1. The children of Israel were sent

back to the wilderness on account of their sin.

2. While they are sent in judgment, they go back of their own accord.

3. Though the fruit of sin, and the

token of God's righteous displeasure, all was overruled for their good.

4. Though chastened and afflicted they are not cast off. (1) They are Divinely delivered. (2) They are Divinely sustained. (3) They are Divinely guided. (4) They are Divinely chastened.

IV. Improvement.

1. Let young believers be not high-minded, but fear.

2. Let backsliders remember and weep.

3. Let tried and troubled saints take fresh courage.—*J. Burns.*

THE EXPLORATION OF THE PROMISED LAND BY THE SPIES, AN ILLUSTRATION OF HUMAN INQUIRIES INTO DIVINE REALMS.

(Verses 21-25.)

I. The exploration of the Promised Land by the Spies was thorough.

"So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, at the entrance of Hamath." They went quite through the land from the *Negeb* in the south to Rehob on the northern border. In this they are worthy of imitation by inquirers into Divine realms. It is the shallow and superficial students of *Nature*, of *Providence*, and of the *Bible* who carp and cavil at the discoveries which they make; for such investigators can only make obscure, partial, one-sided discoveries. If man would be admitted into the secrets of *Nature*, of *Providence*, or of the *Bible*; if he would discover the power, the wisdom, and the grace which are enshrined in them; if he would be brought into communion with the mind and spirit of their Divine Author, he must investigate them thoroughly, patiently, and reverently. (a)

II. The exploration of the Promised Land by the spies led to the discovery of difficulties.

1. *They discovered formidable enemies to their taking possession of the land.* "And they came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the children of Anak, were." Before they entered upon the Promised Land the Israelites would have to conquer these mighty tribes. We cannot attain unto a large and correct acquaintance with the revelation of God in *Nature*, *Providence*, or the *Bible*, without battling with and overcoming many and grave difficulties. We cannot attain unto

self-conquest, self-possession, without patient, persistent, and courageous warfare. We cannot inherit the Promised Land of Divine privileges without determined struggles with powerful foes. Our own unbelief, carnality, worldliness, and selfishness; the corrupt influences of society; and the temptations of the devil,—these are the *Anakim* with which we must contend, and which we must conquer if we would enter into full possession of our Promised Land. No true kingdom is ever entered except "through much tribulation." (b)

2. *They discovered these formidable enemies where they least expected them.* It was at Hebron that they found the *Anakim*. Now Hebron was sacred in the annals of the greatest of their ancestors. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah all found their last resting place there (Gen. xxiii. 19, 20; xlix. 31); yet there they find the tribes that are likely to offer the stoutest resistance to their taking the land. "In that place where they expected the greatest encouragements they met with the greatest discouragements. Where the bodies of their ancestors kept possession for them the giants kept possession against them." So with us in Christian life and enterprise, it is not where we feel there is danger and are guarding against it that our real foes and grave perils are; but in places and in circumstances where we least expect them. How often have godly men failed where they seemed most strong! Abraham was preëminent for faith; yet he fell into sin more than once through the failure of his

faith in little trials. Peter deemed his courage unquestionable and invincible; yet it was his courage that gave way in the hour of trial.

III. The exploration of the Promised Land by the spies led to the discovery of rich treasures.

"And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence," &c. (23-25).

1. *The discovered treasures were rich.* The valley of Eshcol was celebrated for its abundant and choice fruits. One very large and rich bunch of grapes they cut and conveyed from thence to the people. "They cut down from thence a branch with one cluster, and they bare it between two upon a staff," &c. (c)

How rich are the fruits of that inheritance of Divine privilege to which God calls us! What satisfaction, peace, hope, joy! &c.

2. *The discovered treasures were various.* "Grapes, pomegranates, and figs." How various are the treasures and delights God bestows upon His people! They have joy in the new discoveries of truth; joy in high and holy fellowships; joy in Christ-like service; joy in loving and being loved, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Only those who wait upon the Bible through a life-time of prayer, study, and patience, can be rewarded with an intelligent and beautiful reverence for it, as for "the Wisdom of God in a mystery." Think! it is not simply Wisdom, but the Wisdom of God, and not simply the Wisdom of God, but the Wisdom of God in a mystery.

Very notable is the agreement between the Book, and every man's deep nature. "Deep calleth unto deep." The Bible is the only profoundly human thing in the world. The world, and all that is in the world, are in agreement only with our shallow nature. When conscience awakes from its sensual slumbers, there is a marvellous agreement between its suspicions, its fears, its dark utterances, and the Old Testament. The true Mount Sinai is in the human soul. But there are also deep and far-reaching longings in man, as well as conscience, and the New Testament is a complete answer to all these longings.

The Bible seems to be the law of my own

3. *Specimens of the discovered treasures were carried to the people by the explorers.* "They cut down a branch with one cluster," &c. The probability is that Caleb and Joshua brought this cluster; for the other explorers were not disposed to encourage the people to attempt to take possession of the land. The knowledge and enjoyments we now have of Divine things are but specimens and foretastes of what is reserved in heaven for us. The "fulness of joy," and the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," await us in the hereafter.

4. *The discovered treasures deeply impressed the mind of the explorers and of those who saw the specimens.* We see this from the fact that the valley from which the bunch of grapes was cut was henceforth called, "the valley of the cluster." "The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence." Were we not blinded and prejudiced by sin, the rich treasures of Gospel grace would so impress our hearts that we should eagerly seek Him in whom they are stored and through whom they are bestowed.

being outwritten. It meets every difficulty, it throws light on every mystery, it supplies every want, it leaves nothing to be desired.

There is much in the Book to exercise both patience and hope; and I need both. I need patience, under the present dark and corrupt condition of nature, and I need hope, that the mystery of God will be finished. It is finished in our Lord Jesus Christ. When all the redeemed shall have the Spirit of Christ for their spirit, and when all matter shall be like unto His glorious Body, then the mystery of God will be finished also in the universe.—*John Pulsford.*

(b) Any service for God, if it be done at all, should be hard work. If you want to be feather-bed soldiers, go and enlist somewhere else; but Christ's soldiers must fight, and they will find the battle rough and stern. We, of the Church militant, are engaged in no mimic manoeuvres and grand parades; our life is real and earnest; our battle, though not with flesh and blood, is with spiritual wickedness in high places, and it involves hard blows and

keen anguish. You must look for real fighting if you become a soldier of Christ, and O, Sir, if the excuse for fainting be that the work is toilsome, that it is too much a drag upon you, why did you begin it? You ought to have known this at the first. You should have counted the cost. But, ah, let me add, the work was not toilsome when your heart was loving, neither would it now be so hard if your soul were right with God. This is but an unworthy excuse. Ardent spirits love difficulties; fervent love delights in making sacrifices; they would not wish to swim for ever in smooth seas of pleasure; they know that manhood's truest glory lies in contending with and overcoming that which is hard. Give to the child the easy task, but let the man have something worth the doing to perform. Instead of shrinking because the work is tedious, we ought to gird up our loins and push on the enterprise with all the greater force.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) In conformity with the text before us, the size and richness of the clusters of the grapes in many parts of Palestine excite more astonishment than even the size and richness of the grapes. An Italian traveller, Mariti, avers, that in different parts of Syria he saw clusters that would be a sufficient burden for one man. A German traveller, Neitzschütz, declares, with some solemnity of assertion, that in the mountains of Israel he had seen and eaten from vine clusters that were half an ell long, and the grapes of which were equal to two finger joints in length. A very intelligent French traveller, Nau, is still more particular. He declares that one who had seen the vine only in the vine countries of France and Italy, could form no just conception of the size to which the clusters attain in Syria. He had himself seen clusters weighing ten or twelve pounds; and he had reason to believe that in the Archipelago clusters of thirty or forty

pounds were not uncommon. A still older traveller of the same nation, Doubdan, tells us that, travelling near Bethlehem, he found himself in a delightful valley, replete with rose-trees and aromatic plants, and planted with vines. This was that which tradition regards as the valley of Eshcol, from which the spies obtained their cluster. Not being there in the season, he did not see the fruit himself; but he was assured that clusters of ten and twelve pounds were not seldom gathered from these vines. We share the doubt, however, that this was the vale of Eshcol, which seems rather to have been near to Hebron. It was in this neighbourhood that Nau saw the large vine-clusters of which he makes mention. In this quarter the hill-sides are still thickly planted with vineyards, the vines of which are laden with large clusters of delicious grapes. It is beyond a doubt that the cluster in question was gathered in the south of Palestine; for as the spies had seen these grapes in their outward way, it would have been absurd for them to gather any but at the last available point towards their own encampment. As striking an instance as any that we have quoted, has occurred in our own country, in regard to the produce of a *Syrian* vine at Welbeck, the seat of the Duke of Portland. A bunch from this vine was sent, in 1819, as a present to the Marquis of Buckingham, which weighed nineteen pounds. It was conveyed to its destination, more than twenty miles distant, on a staff, by four labourers, two of whom bore it in rotation; thus affording a striking illustration of the means adopted by the explorers in transporting the Eshcol cluster. The greatest diameter of this Welbeck cluster was nineteen inches and a half; its circumference four feet and a half; and its length nearly twenty-three inches.—*John Kitto, D.D., F.S.A.*

ESHCOL.

(Verse 23.)

"They came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes."

We reach the brook of Eshcol through a humbling path. When Sinai is left the march of Israel advances prosperously. There is no check. And now a few more steps will plant the pilgrim-host in Canaan.

Surely courage will now brace each nerve, &c. But is it so? Alas! they pause. The unworthy thought creeps in—perchance the nations are too strong for us, &c. Thus they distrust: and tremblingly propose to search the

country by spies. They follow sight—not faith. And unbelief is not dead. It lurks in corners of each heart, &c. Beware—look inward He is the fool of fools, who tests Divine assurances in the scales of mortal vision.

The spies are named. They are sent forth to ascertain whether their God be true, &c.

Contemplate that cluster which they bear—that earnest of rich fields. These grapes are proof of Canaan's exuberant fertility. So, too, there is a heavenly Eshcol before faith's eye. It shows delicious clusters. The joy before

Christ cheered His heart. The joy before us should gird up our loins. The racer bounds when he discerns the goal just won. Come, then, in Eshcol's grapes read faith's amazing prize.

Heaven! It is the palace of the great Eternal. Salvation for its walls—its gates are praise. Its atmosphere is perfect love. It is the home prepared of God before the worlds were made, for His redeemed children. It is the mansion which the ascended Jesus still labours to make fit. It is so fair that all Jehovah's skill cannot increase the beauty. . . .

This cluster was the vine's perfection. So, too, perfection is the essence of our heaven. Nothing can enter there to stain, &c. Oh! what a contrast to our present state! . . . But our high home is barricaded against sin.

Here the foul tempter all day long is spreading nets. There is no saint too saintly for his vile approach. In Eden he approached the innocent. To Jesus he said, Worship me. . . . But in heaven this misery has ceased. Satan is without—far off—the bottomless pit has shut its mouth upon him.

Here fears rush in. The ground is slippery. A precipice is near. We tremble on the brink . . . May I not, after all, fail of salvation! But fear dies at heaven's gate. The happy company realize that they are lofty above injury.

Earth is affliction's home. A troop of sorrows compass us about. Death tears away the much-loved friend.

Sickness invades the frame . . . But heaven is a wide sea of bliss without a ripple. All tears are wiped away. We bathe in oceans of delight.

Here unbelief oft gathers, as a chilly cloud. It mantles the soul in darkness . . . But in heaven a present God is always everywhere. We cannot move beyond the sunshine of His love.

Here we thirst for knowledge, but we reach it not. How much concerning God is utterly beyond our grasp. Blindness curtails our prospect. Clouds narrow our circumference. But heaven is a realm without horizon. We know God, as we are known. We love intelligently, &c.

In the true Eshcol's cluster there is this richer fruit; Jesus is seen. This is the crown of heaven. The rising of the sun makes day. The presence of the king constitutes the court. The revelation of the Lord, without one intervening cloud, is the grand glory of the endless kingdom.

Believer, what will it be to gaze on the manifested beauty of Him, who is altogether lovely! What, to comprehend all that Jesus is! What, never to lose sight of Him!

Are you a traveller towards this heaven? When you behold the grapes of Eshcol, do you know that the vineyard is your sure heritage? The kingdom is for the subjects of the King. Are you His by faith? This is that Spirit-implanted confidence, which looks to Eshcol, and claims all Canaan as a promised home.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

THE REPORTS OF THE SPIES, AND THE LESSONS THESE REPORTS TEACH US.

(Verses 26-33.)

I. Examine the Reports of the Spies.

First: *The report of the majority.* The impression produced upon ten of the explorers from their survey differed from that produced upon the other two. We will first attend to the testimony of the ten.

1. *They testify to the fertility of the land.* "Surely it floweth with milk and

honey; and this is the fruit of it" (See remarks on verses 23-25, and comp. Deut. viii. 7-9).

2. *They set forth the difficulties in the way of taking the land.* Speedily they pass from the cheering announcement of the fertility of the country to a gloomy and discouraging representation of the grave difficulties which opposed

their possession of it. "Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land," &c. (verses 28, 29, 32, 33). These obstacles which seemed to them insuperable were of two classes:—(1) The defences of the cities. "The cities are walled and very great." In their eyes every town was an impregnable stronghold. (2) The strength and stature of the inhabitants. "Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there," &c. "All the people that we saw in it are men of great stature," &c.

3. *They declare their inability to take the land.* "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And yet the army of Israel numbered 600,000 able men, and was well organized.

4. *They suggest the difficulty of maintaining possession of the land.* "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." According to their representation, by reason of the fertility of its soil and the importance of its situation, different nations contended for its possession; so that they who held it must needs be armed and watchful, and frequently suffer loss in battle.

5. *They exhibit the most despicable cowardice.* Surely the tone of their report is utterly unworthy of men who knew that the army of Israel was 600,000 strong. Alas! they were almost destitute of the higher attributes of manhood. If we would estimate the cowardice of their conduct aright we have but to compare, or rather contrast it with the conduct of Caleb (verse 30), or with that of David (1 Sam. xvii. 32-37). (a)

6. *They manifest the most deplorable and sinful unbelief.* In framing their conclusions and delivering their report they utterly ignored the Lord God. Faith in Him was entirely absent. Unbelief was supreme. Their unbelief was aggravated in its sinfulness by reason of—(1) The promises which He had repeatedly made to them. Had He not assured them again and again that he would give them the land? (2) The mighty works which He had

wrought for them. Is it possible that they have forgotten the wonders wrought for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea? Could they discover no significance or feel no inspiration to faith in the daily miracle of the manna? (3) The visible symbol of His presence with them. The miraculous and majestic Pillar of His Presence was visible to every eye. Yet despite all these things unbelief held undisputed supremacy within them.

Second: *The Report of the minority.* Caleb and Joshua seem to have agreed with the report of the ten other spies in some particulars; but in two most important matters they differed from them. (1) Their impression of their relative power was different; they held that they were "well able to overcome" the inhabitants of the land. (2) Their advice as to their practical action was different; they counselled that they should "go up at once and possess" the land. In considering the conduct of Caleb, who was supported by Joshua, let us notice—

1. *The exhortation which he addressed to the people.* "Let us go up at once, and possess it." He exhorts to (1) *Mutual action.* "Let us go up." There is far more inspiration in, "Let us go," than in Let them go, or than in Go ye. (2) *Prompt action.* "Let us go up at once." He would lose no time in debating what they could do, or what they should do; but urges immediate and bold action. (3) *Confident action.* "Let us go up at once, and possess it." "He does not say, 'Let us go up, and conquer it;' he looks upon that to be as good as done already; but, 'Let us go up, and possess it; there is nothing to be done but to enter, and take the possession which God our great Lord is ready to give us.'"

2. *The assurance by which he enforced this exhortation.* "For we are well able to overcome it." The fortified cities and the giant peoples did not appal Caleb and Joshua. They were confident that Israel could vanquish the Canaanites and take the land.

3. *The faith in God which inspired this assurance.* The confidence of these two brave men was neither in the strength and courage of their army, nor in the skill and spirit of their leaders; but in the Lord their God. This is made abundantly clear in verses 8 and 9 of the following chapter. This faith of theirs had sure and splendid warranty in—(1) The divine promises to Israel. (2) The divine performances for Israel. (3) The Divine Presence with Israel. Their faith was profoundly *reasonable*. Can walled cities or armies of giants withstand the Almighty? (b) Their faith was thoroughly *religious*. It rested in God; it honoured Him.

II. Deduce the Lessons arising from these reports.

1. *A statement may be true as to matters of fact, yet false and evil in its spirit and influence.* The report of the ten spies was true as to actual facts; but the balance or proportion of its statements was false, the spirit which breathed in it was mean and cowardly, and its influence was extremely pernicious. A man may be guilty of lying while speaking the truth in words. You may lie by an accent, by disproportion of the respective branches of a narrative, by undue warmth in one thing and coldness in another, by the drapery in which bare facts are clothed. Truthfulness is a thing not merely of words, but first and chiefly of spirit.

2. *The cause of God has never been left without some true witnesses.* Here there were ten faithless cowards, but there were two brave believers; ten who brought an evil report, but two who brought a good report. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

3. *Majorities are not trustworthy criteria of truth and right.* Of the twelve explorers "only two deal faithfully and truly, the rest were treacherous and

hollow-hearted hypocrites." "*Vox populi vox Dei*, is true only in a community of holy beings—true only in heaven. In a corrupt world like ours it is impossible for language to embody a greater falsehood. As the devil leads the world captive at his will, *Vox populi vox diaboli*, is the truth here." The popularity of a doctrine, or a cause, or a party, is no guarantee of its truth or righteousness. Because the many tread the wrong path our obligation to tread the right path is in no wise diminished. "Error does not become truth because majorities accept it, and truth does not become falsehood because a minority only accept it." Let us follow those things which are right and true whether they be popular or not.

4. *To judge by appearances only is foolish, sinful, and perilous.* The report of the ten spies was based solely upon what they saw through their bodily eyes! it does not take any account whatever of the presence, or power, or promise of God. In ordinary every-day purposes and duties he is a foolish man who trusts solely to bodily sight for guidance. To walk by sight alone instead of by faith; to accept the testimony of the senses, and reject the testimony of the soul; to trust our own reasonings rather than the Word of God, is egregious folly and heinous sin. Well does Mr. Carlyle say, "There is but one thing without honour; smitten with eternal barrenness, inability to do or to be: insincerity, unbelief. He who believes no thing, who believes only the shows of things, is not in relation with nature and fact at all." (c)

NOTE.—The points suggested in the preceding article are too numerous and important for one discourse. Three sermons may without difficulty be arranged on this section,—one, on a *discouraging report*; another, on an *encouraging exhortation*; and a third, on *modern lessons from ancient reports*.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Moral cowardice is the source of every mean and pitiful thing, renders a man afraid of duty, afraid of death; so that when the moment for action arrives, he equivocates,

intreats, fears. Moral courage is religion in action; moral cowardice is religion in defeat. Oh, brother, exclaims a strenuous thinker, never strike sail to a fear, come gently into

port or sail with God over the seas. Without courage, the courage of the heart, no one can be truly great. This is a courage that does not depend on thews or sinews, but on the soul. It animated the patriots and martyrs of old, as it animates the patriots and martyrs of to-day. Moral courage makes the man, the absence of it the knave, the driveller, and the fool. It is to the age's dishonour that its intellectual tendencies are marked with the characters of fear. Yet courage must be guided by purity and truth; since divested of these, it is shorn of half its strength.—*H. McCormac*.

(b) He who walks by sight only, walks in a blind alley. He who does not know the freedom and joy of reverent, loving speculation, wastes his life in a gloomy cell of the mouldiest of prisons. Even in matters that are not distinctively religious, faith will be found to be the inspiration and strength of the most useful life. It is faith that does the great work of the world. It is faith that sends men in search of unknown coasts. It is faith that retrims the lamp of inquiry, when sight is weary of the flame. It is faith that unfastens the cable and gives men the liberty of the seas. It is faith that inspires the greatest works in civilization. So we cannot get rid of religion unless we first get rid of faith, and when we get rid of faith we give up our birth-right and go into slavery for ever.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) Imagine a man who disbelieves everything he cannot see with his naked eye. Suppose that it should come to pass to-morrow that everything shall be taken away which cannot be read by the naked eye, or that has not been discovered by the naked eye. What will come? Shut up the heavens, for astronomy must go; and cover over the fields, for botany shall tell little to the naked eye. All science, indeed, would be impoverished, insulted, degraded. Yet the man who cannot read his

own mother's letter without the aid of an eyeglass, insists upon reading the infinite and eternal God by his own unassisted powers; says, that whatsoever is too mysterious for his natural understanding is but worthy of insult, degradation, and contempt. I charge him, before God's face, with insulting his own common sense, and contradicting the highest experiences of mankind.—*Ibid.*

Walking by sight is just this—"I believe in myself;" whereas walking by faith is—"I believe in God." If I walk by sight, I walk by myself; if I walk by faith, then there are two of us, and the second One—ah! how great, how glorious, how mighty is He—the Great All-in-all—God-all-sufficient! Sight goes a warfare at its own charges, and becomes a bankrupt, and is defeated. Faith goes a warfare at the charges of the King's Exchequer, and there is no fear that Faith's bank shall ever be broken. Sight builds the house from its own quarry, and on its own foundation, but it begins to build and is never able to finish, and what it does build rests on the sand and falls. But faith builds on the foundation laid in eternity, in the fair colours of the Saviour's blood, in the covenant of grace. It goes to God for every stone to be used in the building, and brings forth the top-stone with shouting of "Grace, grace unto it."—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

Where men are called of God to go forth, it should be theirs instantly and gladly to obey, how dark soever or stormy the night into which they move. Life is a discipline. Shrewd men say they want to know whither they are going before they set out on a journey; but men of higher shrewdness, men of Christian faith, often go out into enterprise and difficulty without being able to see one step before them. The watchword of the noblest, truest souls is, "to walk by faith, not by sight;" faith has a wider dominion and a more splendid future.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE ANCIENT CANAAN, A TYPE OF HEAVEN.

(Verse 30.)

I. In what respects the ancient Canaan was a type of heaven.

1. It was a promised land, and the right of possession was founded on the promise.

2. It was a land in which God was peculiarly present.

3. It was a land of fruition.

4. It was a free gift.

II. As the Israelites had dangers, difficulties, and discouragements on

their way to Canaan, so have Christians in their progress to heaven.

1. There are formidable foes to be encountered.

2. There are adversaries in timid and faint-hearted associates.

3. The Israelites in their progress were made dependent on the Lord for all things.

III. Consider the resolution: "Let us go up at once and possess it."

1. The title to it is sure.
2. We have means and ordinances by which needed strength is supplied.

3. Here we have many foretastes of the good land.—*The Evangelical Preacher, quoted in "The Biblical Museum."*

CALEB.—A CALL TO INQUIRY AND COURAGE.

(Verse 30.)

Glance at the history. This incident sets forth vividly some of the difficulties which lie in the way of the higher kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and it is in this view that I intend to regard the graphic narrative.

I. The kingdom of heaven challenges the inquiry of all men. It addresses an appeal to human reason and to human trust. Though itself a revelation, and therefore not to be handled as a common thing, nor to be tested by common instruments, yet Christianity invites the most careful inquest. It does not seek to rest upon the human intellect as a burden, but to shine upon it as a light; it does not fasten itself upon the human heart as an excrescence, but blesses and enriches it with a new and mightier life. If Christianity may be represented under the image of a land such as ancient Canaan, then it is fair to say of it, that it offers right of way over its hills and through its valleys, that its fruits and flowers are placed at the disposal of all travellers, and that he who complains that the land is shut against him speaks not only ungratefully, but most falsely.

There are not wanting men who say that Christianity forbids inquiry.

The kingdom of heaven is the highest revelation of the mind of God to the mind of man. The mind must be at its highest possible point of energy in order to lay hold of the doctrines which constitute that revelation. To get the mind to the point requires the excitement of the *heart*; for mind is never fully alive whilst the moral powers are dormant. When the heart is moved in its deepest passions, and the mind is set in its highest key, the man is prepared to enter upon the great studies to which he is invited by the Gospel.

It is certainly true, and ought to be taken account of in this connection, that some people have peculiar notions of what is meant by inquiry. In the first instance, they dismiss everything like reverence; in the next place, they make themselves the standard and measure of all truth; and in the third place, they seek to materialize and debase everything that is spiritual and heavenly. This is not inquiry, it is insolent self-sufficiency: it is not the spirit of a student seeking light, it is the spirit of a braggart who thinks the sun inferior to his spark. The tone of mind must be in harmony with the subject considered; in every department of intellectual life it is required that a student be self-controlled, patient, docile; that his temper be subdued, and that his conclusions be reached through long and earnest watching of processes. This is required in all sciences; why not in the science of sciences—the knowledge and worship of the true God?

II. Different reports will of course be brought by the inquirers. It was so in the case of the spies—it will be so in all inquiry. The result of the survey will be according to the peculiarities of the surveyors. As streams are impregnated by the soils over which they flow, so subjects are affected by the individualism of the minds through which they pass. Thus Christianity may be said to be different things to different minds. To the speculative man it is a great attempt to solve deep problems in theology; to the controversialist it is a challenge to debate profound subjects on new ground; to the poet it is a dream, a wondrous vision many-coloured as the rainbow, a revelation many-voiced as the tunes of

the wind or the harmonies of the sea. Each inquirer will have his own way of reporting the result of his inquiry. Christian testimony is not of one unchanging sort. One Christian will report his experience in highly intellectual phraseology, as if God had entered his heart through the shining chambers of his mind; another will show that he has reached peace through many a stormy conflict with doubt; another will speak the language of music as though he had been taught it in intercourse with the angels; another will stammer by reason of sobs and tears. Yet the subject is the same, the result is the same—this is the diversity that is unity—

“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”

1. Some inquirers will see *all the hindrances*. 2. All will confess that there is *something good* in the land. 3. Those who hold back by reason of the difficulties will come to a miserable end. (a) We don't escape by *false reasoning*. (b) We don't escape by *fear*.

Application: 1. Some have shown the spirit of Caleb—*what is your testimony?* 2. Will any resolve now, in Divine strength, to follow the Lord fully?

Observe that it is the *spirit* of Caleb which is commended.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE SPIES.

(Verse 32, and chap. xiv. 6, 7.)

The land of Canaan is a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message we bring back to them. And if they find that our report is a gloomy one or an unholy one, they turn aside and they say, “It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few.”

I. The ungodly world are not to be excused for that instead of investigating religion for themselves, they usually trust to the representation of others.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be *joyful*. “By this,” says he, “shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous counten-

ance, then I will believe it to be a good thing.” But hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved Him? Would you not know from Scripture, if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? *Psa. xxxii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 16; Phil. iv. 4.* Again, you say you will test the *holiness* of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, He intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading *men*. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of Judgment, “Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion.” In business, &c., you were independent enough. You are asked to follow Christ Himself.

Until, then, you can find a flaw in *His* character, a mistake in *His* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of His followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from Him because His disciples forsake Him and flee. "Every man shall bear his own burden."

II. Bring forth the bad spies.

These spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do*; for to a worldling, words are nothing—acts are everything.

1. I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit*. If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom." He never mentions God's people, without calling them, "God's *tried* children." He is always in the valley, &c. See him at home. . . . Hear him pray. . . . These men are evil spies. . . . Permit me to bear my testimony. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness," &c. It is a land that floweth with milk and honey, &c.

2. The next one *makes very boastful pretensions to piety*. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" Follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. . . . What does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." . . . But while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite and the unholy man.

3. *The Christian man, . . . there are times when his witness is not consistent*. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen; and when you meet with a Christian who is proud—and such a thing has been known; when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what

he has at other times declared by his acts. . . . If sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, do not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity.

III. Now we have some good spies.

1. *An aged Christian*. "Fifty and six years have I served Him, and I have never found Him once unfaithful."

2. *The sufferer*. "He has made my bed in all my sickness; He has given me joy in my sorrows," &c.

3. *A Christian merchant*; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." Such a man brings up a good report of the land.

4. *My sisters, it is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report*. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. When you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

5. *And you, servants, can do the same*. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere.

IV. The great necessity of bringing out a uniformly good testimony concerning religion.

1. *Every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act, puts a slur on Christ*. Do not suffer His escutcheon to be tarnished; do not permit His banner to be trampled in the dust.

2. *If you do wrong, the world will be quite sure to notice you*. Remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

3. *If you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good*. The Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure

to hear of him if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore, &c.

As for you who fear not God, re-

member, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you.—C. H. Spurgeon.

CHAPTER XIV

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 4. *Let us make a captain.* It appears from Neh. ix. 17, that they actually appointed another leader.

Verse 5. *Fell on their faces, &c.* In solemn prayer to God, and in the presence of all the people, in the hope of changing their minds.

Verse 9. *They are bread for us; i.e., we can easily destroy them, and all their possessions, and their land with all its productions shall become ours.*

Their defence is departed. Heb. lit., "their shadow." A very expressive metaphor for shelter and protection in the sultry east. Comp. Ps. xci. 1; cxxi. 5; Isa. xxx. 2; xxxii. 2; xlix. 2; li. 16.

Verse 13, 14. Keil and Del. translate, "'Not only have the Egyptians heard that thou hast brought out this people from among them with Thy might; they have also told it to the inhabitants of this land. They (the Egyptians and other nations) have heard that Thou, Jehovah, art in the midst of this people—that Thou, Jehovah, appearest eye to eye,' &c. The inhabitants of this land (verse 13) were not merely the Arabians, but, according to Exod. xv. 14, sqq., the tribes dwelling in and around Arabia, the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Canaanites, to whom the tidings had been brought of the miracles of God in Egypt and at the Red Sea."

Verse 15. *As one man; equivalent to "with a stroke"* (Judg. vi. 16).

Verse 18. Comp. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

Verses 21-23. Translate, "But as truly as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah, all those men . . . shall not see the land," &c. The Hebrew particle 'כי' in verse 22 (incorrectly rendered "because" in the A.V.) intro-

duces the apodosis of the sentence and the substance of the oath; and, according to the ordinary form of an oath, the particle 'כי', in the beginning of verse 23, merely signifies "not."

Verse 22. *These ten times.* Ten is used here as the number of completeness (Comp. Gen. xxxi. 7). They had now filled up the measure of their iniquities.

Verse 24. *Hath followed me fully.* Lit., "Fulfilled after Me." He had manifested unwavering fidelity in the Divine service. Caleb only is mentioned here because of the conspicuous part he took in opposing the exaggerated account of the evil spies, and in urging the people to a true and courageous course of conduct. And "this first revelation of God to Moses is restricted to the main fact; the particulars are given afterwards in the sentence of God, as intended for communication to the people (verses 26-38)."

Verse 25. *Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley.* "These words are best understood as the continuation of the answer of God to Moses: 'And now the Amalekites and the Canaanites are dwelling (or abiding) in the valley: wherefore, turn you,' &c. (that so ye be not smitten before them). Some difficulty has been occasioned by the fact that in verses 43-45 these tribes are represented rather as dwelling on the hill. The Syriac version alters the passage before us accordingly; but such procedure is unnecessary. What was in one respect a valley, or rather, as the Hebrew term *emek* implies, a broad sweep between hills, might in another respect be itself a hill, as lying on top of the mountain-plateau. Such was precisely the case

with the elevated plain on which the conflict of the disobedient Israelites with the Amalekites and Canaanites eventually ensued.”—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 27. “This announcement commences in a tone of anger, with an *aposiopesis*, ‘How long this evil congregation’ (sc., ‘shall I forgive it,’ the simplest plan being to supply אָשַׁן, as Rosenmüller suggests, from verse 18) ‘that they murmur against me?’” —Keil and Del.

Verse 32. *But as for you, your carcasses, &c.* “Rather, ‘But your carcasses, even yours, shall fall,’” &c.—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 33. *Your children shall wander, &c.* Margin: “shall feed.” Keil and Del: “‘will be pasturing,’ i.e., will lead a restless shepherd’s life.”

Your whoredoms. Their many faithless departures from the Lord.

Verse 34. *My breach of promise.* Margin: “altering of Thy purpose.”

תְּנוּנָה, from נוּן, removal, alienation, i.e., the withdrawal of oneself from a person or thing, and so metaphor. enmity.—*Fuerst.* The word is used only in this place and in Job xxxiii. 10. Keil and Del.: “‘My turning away from you,’ or *abalienatio*.”

Verse 45. *Hormah.* Keil and Del. say the word means, “the ban-place”; but *Fuerst*: “fortress, mountain fastness; from הָרִם, to be high, to be prominent.” The name is used here by anticipation. Its earlier name was Zephath (Judg. i. 17). The circumstances which led to the change of the name are given in chap. xxi. 1-3. It was a royal city of a Canaanitish tribe on the southern frontier of Palestine. Its precise situation is uncertain.

THE REBELLION OF ISRAEL UPON RECEIVING THE REPORT OF THE SPIES.

(Verses 1-5.)

In this chapter we have the consequences of the evil report which the ten unbelieving explorers gave to the people; and in the section now before us we see its immediate effect upon the people.

I. Grievous mental distress.

“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.”

1. *The distress was general*—almost universal. “All the congregation” were disheartened by the gloomy report which they had heard. The whole nation, with very few and distinguished exceptions, was stricken with dismay and grief, and spent the night in lamentation and weeping.

2. *The distress was unrestrained in its expression.* They “lifted up their voice, and cried.” “The word crying,” says Babington, “noteth out the manner of their weeping, even with vociferation or roaring, howling and yelling, that is, in most impatient and grievous manner.” In the most childish

and pusillanimous manner they utterly give way to their feelings. (a)

3. *The distress was sinful.* It sprang from their unbelief of God’s assurances to them. The reports of the spies were opposed to the word of God to them, yet they receive those reports rather than that word. They even accept the cowardly opinions of the faithless spies rather than the inspiring declarations of the Lord God. Their cries and tears are the expression of their cowardly fears; and their cowardly fears arose from their unbelief towards God. Their cries and tears proclaim their sin and shame.

II. Unreasonable and unjust murmuring.

“And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron,” &c. (ver. 2). Their murmuring was—

1. *Unreasonable.* They cry out because they dread death by the sword of the Canaanites, and yet they wish that they had died in Egypt or in the wilder-

ness. "Surely it had been at least as eligible to have fallen, soldier-like, sword in hand, in attempting to conquer Canaan, as to have died slaves in Egypt, or by famine or pestilence in the wilderness!" "They wish to die, for fear of dying." There is neither reason nor nobility in their conduct. (b)

2. *Unjust.* (1) To Moses and Aaron, who had dared and done and borne so much for them. (2) Their murmuring was still more unjust to God, who had done and was still doing such great and gracious things for them. All His mercies are forgotten, all His glorious purposes towards them disregarded, all His precious promises disbelieved, and base and bitter murmuring openly indulged in, because ten cowards have magnified the difficulties in the way of their enterprise. (c)

III. Shocking blasphemy.

"And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" As Matthew Henry expresses it, "Here is a most wicked blasphemous reflection upon God Himself, as if He had brought them hither on purpose that they might fall by the sword, and that their wives and children, those poor innocents, should be a prey. Thus do they in effect charge that God, who is Love itself, with the worst of malice, and eternal Truth with the basest hypocrisy, suggesting that all the kind things He had said to them, and done for them, hitherto, were intended only to decoy them into a snare, and to cover a secret design carried on all along to ruin them. Daring impudence! But what will not that tongue speak against Heaven that is set on fire of hell?" Their blasphemy involved—

1. *Unbelief of the Divine Word.* It expresses the complete rejection of God's declared purposes concerning them and His promises to them, and the unqualified acceptance of the worst suggestions of the faithless explorers.

2. *Base ingratitude to the Divine Being.* To all His great and undeserved kindness to them, and for all His

mighty and merciful deeds on their behalf, this is their response, "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land?" &c. How applicable to them are the words of Rowe—

"To break thy faith,
And turn a rebel to so good a master,
Is an ingratitude unmatched on earth.
The first revolting angel's pride could only
Do more than thou hast done; thou copiest
well,
And keep'st the black original in view!" (d)

IV. Foolish and wicked rebellion.

"Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another: Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Consider :

1. *The folly of this rebellion.* (1) How could they get back into Egypt? Could they expect that the Lord would lead them, defend them, and provide for them in a journey which was directly and entirely opposed to His will? Yet without this, how was it possible for them to "return into Egypt"? (2) If they could have returned into Egypt, what kind of reception were they likely to meet with there? Their folly was utter and egregious.

2. *The baseness of this rebellion.* To return into Egypt was to go back into bondage. If the nobler attributes of manhood had not been crushed out of them by their former slavery, they would have preferred to die a thousand deaths fighting for the maintenance of their freedom than to be again subjected to the deep degradation of serfdom. But though free in body, they were, alas! mean and cowardly slaves in spirit.

3. *The wickedness of this rebellion.* Rebellion against an oppressive and cruel despotism is justifiable under certain circumstances; but they were under a most righteous and beneficent government. Their rebellion was not against even an excellent human government: blacker than this was their guilt; for they rebelled against the government of the Lord their God.

V. The noble conduct of Moses and Aaron in these painful circumstances.

Consider :

1. *Their exhortation to the people.* From the narrative of the rebellion which Moses gave to the people more than thirty-eight years afterwards, it appears that he endeavoured to calm and encourage the people (Deut. i. 29-31). This appeal to them was (1) *Manly*. "Dread not, neither be afraid of them." (2) *Inspiring*. "The Lord your God which goeth before you, He shall fight for you." (3) *Religious*. He bases his assurance of Divine aid on the wondrous and glorious works which God had done for them. "According to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness," &c. But he appeals to them in vain. "Wise and true," says Babington, "was that inscription in Plato his seal, '*Facilius est movere quæta, quam quietare mota.*'"

2. *Their prayer to God.* "Then

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." (1) They thus manifest their deep distress and shame because of the rebellion of the people. (2) By thus publicly prostrating themselves they probably hoped to move the people for good. (3) They prayed for the interposition of God. "In such distress, nothing remained but to pour out their desires before God." When human strength and wisdom are of no avail; when all other resources fail, and every other hope expires, the good man still hopes in God, and in prayer to Him has an unfailing resource.

NOTE.—In preaching from this portion of the history, it may perhaps be well to take the noble conduct of Moses and Aaron in the rebellion of the people, as the subject of a separate discourse; taking Deut. i. 29-31, and ver. 5 of this chap. as the text.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Shallow judges of human nature are they who think that tears in themselves ever misbecome a man. Sooner mayest thou trust thy purse to a professional pickpocket than give loyal friendship to a man who boasts of eyes to which the heart never mounts in dew. Only when man weeps he should be alone,—not because tears are weak, but because they should be sacred. Tears are akin to prayers. Pharisees parade prayers; impostors parade tears.—*Lord Lytton*.

Tears are not always fruitful; their hot drops
Sometimes but scorch the cheek and dim
the eye;
Despairing murmurs over blackened hopes,
Not the meek spirit's calm and chastened
cry.

Oh! better not to grieve than waste our woe,
To fling away the spirit's finest gold,
To lose, not gain, by sorrow; to overflow
The sacred channels which true sadness
hold.

Weep not too fondly, lest the cherished grief
Should into vain, self-pitying weakness turn;
Weep not too long, but seek Divine relief;
Weep not too fiercely, lest the fierceness
burn.

It is not tears but teaching we should seek;

The tears we need are genial as the shower;
They mould the being while they stain the
cheek,

Freshening the spirit into life and power.

H. Bonar, D.D.

(b) When these ten spies brought back the disastrous account, it spread depression amid the sensitive crowd. And it is singular enough, that if each individual of a crowd were alone, he would think rationally, weigh fairly, and act with some common sense. But of all things upon earth, a crowd, when once excited, seems to become the most tumultuous, and to defy every prescription of precedent and common sense. The excitement runs through the ranks, accumulating at each step till the whole presents one of those anomalous spectacles that make us sometimes wonder at the insanity and infatuation of mankind. We have in this chapter a specimen of a genuine mob, frightened by false fears, acting with all that indiscretion, imprudence, inconsistency, by which mobs, in most countries and in most ages, have been branded or characterised. When they heard the news, they forgot that God was with His people; they forgot that His promises were committed to their success, and sinking into the very depths of despair they "lifted up their voice and wept" a whole

night; and gave utterance to their tumultuous feelings in language the most disgraceful to them as men, the most discreditable to them as professing Christians.—*John Cumming, D.D.*

(c) Consider that murmuring is a mercy-embittering sin, a mercy-souring sin. As the sweetest things put into a sour vessel become sour, or put into a bitter vessel bitter; so murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy that God gives into our hands. The murmurer writes "Marah," that is bitterness, upon all his mercies; and he reads and tastes bitterness in them all. As "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is

sweet," so to the murmuring soul every sweet thing is bitter.—*Brooks.*

(d) Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp

As friend remember'd not.
Shakespeare. "As you Like it." ii. 7.

JOSHUA AND CALEB: A NOBLE EFFORT TO ARREST A NATION'S REBELLION.

(Verses 6-10.)

I. Joshua and Caleb were deeply grieved by reason of the rebellion of the nation.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of them that searched the land, rent their clothes." They did this as a sign of their deep distress at the rebellious attitude of the people. The sins of men are ever a cause of deep grief to holy souls. They who are faithful cannot but mourn over the unfaithfulness of others when they see it. "Rivers of waters," said the Psalmist, "run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because," &c. And Jeremiah cried, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears," &c.

II. Joshua and Caleb nobly endeavoured to arrest the rebellion of the nation.

"They spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying," &c. (verses 7-9). In this address—

1. *They re-assert the excellence of the land.* "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land, . . . a land which floweth with milk and honey" (see notes on chap. xiii. 23, 24).

2. *They declare the attainableness of the land.* "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land,

and give it us." (1) It was attainable as a Divine gift. "He will give it us." God had repeatedly promised to lead them in and to give them possession of the land. See Gen. xvii. 8; xxviii. 4; Exod. iii. 8; vi. 4, 8; and comp. Ps. xlv. 3. (2) This gift would certainly be bestowed unless they alienated from them the Divine favour. "If the Lord delight in us," &c. If they did not by their sin cause Him to withdraw His good pleasure from them the land would certainly be theirs.

3. *They exhort the people not to violate the conditions of its attainment.* (1) By rebelling against the Lord. "Only rebel not ye against the Lord." Rebellion against God deprives man of every worthy spiritual inheritance, excludes him from every heaven of the soul. (2) By dreading the people of the land. "Neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us," &c. To dread the people of the land was to dishonour God by distrusting Him. He was not with the people of the land. "Their shadow is departed from them." When God gives up a people, as He had given up the idolatrous and corrupt Canaanites, their defence is gone. When a people have sunk so deeply in sin as to compel God to abandon them, the strongest walls are but a miserable and worthless defence to them. But the Lord was with

Israel. "The Lord is with us: fear them not." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" While God is with us, we may confidently say, even in the presence of the most numerous and mighty foes, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." To dread our enemies is to distrust, and, by distrusting, to dishonour God. So Joshua and Caleb wisely and bravely tried to crush the rebellion, and to awaken a worthy spirit in the people. But their excellent effort was in vain. The excited multitude was utterly impervious to reason. Still, honour to Joshua and Caleb for their brave effort! (a)

III. Joshua and Caleb were in danger by reason of their effort to arrest the rebellion of the nation.

"All the congregation bade stone them with stones." See here—

1. *The tactics of an excited mob when defeated in argument.* This mad multitude could not gainsay or controvert the statement of Joshua and Caleb; but having on its side some six hundred thousand men, and on the other side only four (including Moses and Aaron), it was an easy thing to propose to stone them; and as cowardly as it was easy. That must be a bad cause that needs to be supported by persecution. Reasons must be very scarce when men resort to stones.

2. *The folly of an excited mob.* This proposal to stone Joshua and Caleb was quite insane. (1) Stoning would not disprove the testimony, or take away the wisdom from the counsel of the two true and brave explorers. (2) Stoning would involve the nation in deeper guilt and disgrace. Utterly and sometimes outrageously unreasonable is an

excited multitude, and ready to propose and to perform things not only extremely foolish but terribly wicked, as in this case.

3. *The perils of faithfulness.* Because of their loyalty to truth and duty Joshua and Caleb are in danger of being stoned to death. It has always been a perilous thing for a man to bear witness to an unpopular truth, or to advocate an unpopular cause, or to oppose a popular movement. He who would do any of these things must not count it a strange thing if he is reviled, slandered, and sorely persecuted. But, rightly regarded, it is unspeakably more perilous if man from fear, or any other motive, prove unfaithful to truth and recreant to duty. A destiny of eternal shame awaits such.

"They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three." (b)

IV. Joshua and Caleb rescued from danger by the interposition of God.

"And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." Keil and Del.: "Jehovah interposed with His judgment, . . . the majesty of God flashed out before the eyes of the people in a light which suddenly burst forth from the tabernacle (see Exod. xvi. 10)." A revelation like this would strike that cowardly host with instant confusion and alarm. "Those who faithfully expose themselves for God," says M. Henry, "are sure to be taken under His special protection, and shall be hidden from the rage of men, either under heaven or in heaven."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) On the whole, honour to small minorities, when they are genuine ones. Severe is their battle sometimes, but it is victorious always like that of gods. Tancred of Hauteville's sons, some eight centuries ago, conquered all Italy; bound it up into organic masses, of vital order after a sort; founded thrones and principalities upon the same

which have not yet entirely vanished,—which, the last dying wrecks of which, still wait for some worthier successor it would appear. The Tancred Normans were some Four Thousand strong; the Italy they conquered in open fight, and bound up into masses at their ordering will, might count Eight Millions, all as large of bone, as eupeptic and

black whiskered as they. How came the small minority of Normans to prevail in this so hopeless-looking debate? Intrinsically, doubt it not, because they were in the right; because in a dim, instinctive, but most genuine manner, they were doing the commandment of Heaven, and so Heaven had decided that they were to prevail. But extrinsically also, I can see, it was because the Normans were not afraid to have their skins scratched; and were prepared to die in their quarrel where needful. One man of that humour among a thousand of the other, consider it! Let the small minority, backed by the whole Universe, and looked on by such a cloud of invisible witnesses, fall into no despair.—*Thos. Carlyle.*

(b) An English officer, Colonel Wheeler, used to preach in the bazaar of the great city of Delhi. A Mohammedan, Wilayat Ali, was persuaded to give up the false prophet, and to believe in the true Saviour. He was baptised, and, in spite of the sufferings he had to endure in consequence, became a preacher in the bazaars. At last he came to live at Delhi, where he often preached, and thousands flocked to hear him. A great prince, Mirza Hajeer, used to creep like Nicodemus, in the dark evenings, to Wilayat's house, to hear in secret about Jesus. One Monday morning a friend rushed into the house, crying, "The sepoys! the sepoys! They are murdering the Christians!" Wilayat called Fatima, his wife, and his seven children around him, and prayed, "O Lord, we have fallen into the fiery trial! Oh, help us to confess our dear Lord, that if we die we may obtain a crown of glory." He then kissed his wife and children, and said, "Whatever comes, don't deny Christ. If you confess Him, you will have a crown of glory." His wife crying bitterly, he said all he could to comfort her. "Oh, remember, my dear wife, if you die you will go to Jesus, and if you live Jesus will be with you. If any of the missionaries are alive, they will take care of you after my death; but if the missionaries should all die, Christ lives for ever. Even if the children are killed before your eyes, do not deny Christ." While Wilayat was yet speaking, a number of sepoys on horseback rode up to his house, and knowing him to be a Christian, said, "Repeat the Mohammedan creed, or we

will shoot you." But he would not deny his Lord. "Tell us what you are," said one. "I am a Christian, and a Christian I will live and die." They dragged him along the ground, beating him about the head and face with their shoes. Not being soldiers, they had no swords. "Now preach Christ to us," some cried out in mocking tones. Others said, "Turn to Mohammed, and we will let you go." "No, I never, never will!" the faithful martyr cried; "my Saviour took up His cross and went to God, and I will lay down my life and go to Him." The scorching rays of the sun were beating on the poor sufferer's head. With a laugh one of the wretches exclaimed, "I suppose you would like some water." "I do not want water," replied the martyr. "When my Saviour was dying, He had nothing but vinegar mingled with gall. But do not keep me in this pain. If you mean to kill me, do so at once." Another sepoy coming up lifted his sword, the martyr called aloud, "Jesus receive my spirit!" and with one stroke his head was nearly cut off. Fatima, standing under a tree, beheld the stroke; she shrieked with agony, and ran back to her house. But she found it on fire and surrounded by people who were plundering it. Then she fled to Prince Mirza Hajeer's house, where she discovered her fatherless children. At the end of three days Mirza Hajeer came to Fatima, and said, "I dare not keep you any longer, but if you will become a Mohammedan, you will be safe, and I will give you a house, and three pounds a month for your support." But Fatima would not give up her Saviour. No one attempted to kill her, for very few knew she was a Christian. After ten days she escaped with her children out of the town of Delhi; and went to a village forty miles off. After three months, hearing that the English had taken Delhi, she returned thither. But soon her little baby died. Fatima wept much. She now began to inquire about the missionaries, but found they had all been killed. But remembering the missionaries at Agra, her native town, she sent to one of them. What was her joy when an answer arrived, inviting her to go to Agra! She cried for joy, thanked God, and went to her native city with all her surviving children.—*"The Sunday School Teacher."*

JOSHUA AND CALEB'S ENCOURAGING DECLARATION.

(Verse 8.)

Let us lose sight of the Israelites, and direct our thoughts to the universal family of God; and look beyond Canaan to the heavenly land. Our text contains,—

I. A Supposition.

"If the Lord delight in us." Prov.

viii. 30. God delights in His Son, &c. He delights in His holy angels, &c. But have we reason to suppose that He delights in His saints?

1. *We might conclude, indeed, that He could not delight in them, when we reflect,*
(1) On their nothingness and vanity.

"Man at his best estate," &c. (2) On their guilt and rebellion. Not one but is a sinner. (3) On their pollution and want of conformity to His likeness. (4) And more especially when we reflect on His greatness, independence and purity.

2. *But there are the most satisfactory evidences that He does delight in His people.* (1) Observe the names by which He distinguishes them. He calls them His "jewels"—"inheritance"—"treasure"—"diadem"—"crown" and "portion." See the very term in the text. And Prov. xi. 20. (2) Observe the declarations He has made respecting them. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye." He has engaged His constant presence—His unremitting care—His ceaseless goodness—His tender mercy—His gracious interpositions—His richest gifts—His greatest blessings. (3) Observe what He has done for them. Favoured them—sustained them—redeemed them—given His Son—Spirit—promises. (4) What He has provided for them. All needful grace. "The Lord God is a sun," &c. "My God shall supply," &c. "Eye hath not seen," &c. (5) Eternal life and unceasing glory.

"His saints are precious in His sight,
He views His children with delight,"

II. An inference.

"Then He will bring us into this land," &c. Observe here,—

1. *The land specified.* It is "the land afar off." The good land. The heavenly Canaan. The region of immortality. We shall not live here always. Need this rest, &c.

"There is a land of pure delight," &c.

2. *This land is God's gift.* Not the result of merit—free gift of God. It is given in promise—given in Christ. Purchased inheritance.

3. *To this land God must bring His saints.* Difficulties, enemies, and dangers intervene. He will guide to it. Keep—safely conduct, and at length put people into it, as He did Israel. "Fear not, little flock," &c. "Let not your hearts be troubled," &c. Rev. ii. 10, 26; iii. 5, 12. O, yes; the inference is satisfactory, and most conclusive. Let,—

1. *Christians expect it, and live in reference to it.*

2. *Invite others to go with you to the better land.*—Jabez Burns, D.D.

THE DIVINE DECLARATION OF JUDGMENT BECAUSE OF THE REBELLION OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 11, 12.)

In the eleventh verse the Lord remonstrates with Moses on the sin of the rebellious people, and in the twelfth He announces His judgment because of their sin. Let us notice:—

I. The Divine view of Israel's sin.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me?" &c. (ver. 11). This remonstrance sets forth—

1. *The nature of their sin.* They distrusted God. The very root of their rebellion was their unbelief. "How long will it be ere they believe Me?" They did not believe His promises to

them, or His power to fulfil His word. They distrusted both His truth and His strength. (1) Unbelief is a terribly prolific sin: it gives birth to many other sins. (2) Unbelief is a terribly fatal sin: it involves the soul in condemnation and death (John iii. 18, 36).

2. *The reproach which their sin cast upon God.* "The Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me?" "Provoke" is not a good rendering of

וַיִּסְקֹךְ; to scorn, to despise, to contemn, to reject, would better express the meaning of the word (See Fuerst's *Lex.*).

Keil and Del. clearly and truly express the meaning of the interrogation: "Jehovah resented the conduct of the people as base contempt of His Deity, and as utter mistrust of Him, notwithstanding all the signs which He had wrought in the midst of the nation." Unbelief is an insult to God. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." (a)

3. *The long continuance of their sin.* "How long will this people despise Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me?" Protracted, indeed, must have been their unbelief, when the infinitely Patient One cries out concerning it, "How long?" God notes how long we continue in evil. Solemn reflection this. He has marked some of you persisting in evil through many years; and He cries concerning you, "How long?" Let the young see to it that the long-suffering God shall not have to make such an inquiry concerning them.

4. *The aggravation of their sin.* "How long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" Many and marvellous were the manifestations of the Divine power, which they had seen working on their behalf; these should have destroyed their unbelief, and confirmed their faith. Man's unbelief is aggravated in proportion to the number and power of the aids to faith which God has granted to him.

II. The Divine judgment for Israel's sin.

"I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them."

1. *The nature of the judgment.* "I will disinherit them." God proposes to deprive them of the inheritance to which He had called them. They had despised their destiny, and they shall forfeit it. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise," &c. (Heb. iv. 1-11.)

2. *The instrument of the judgment.* "I will smite them with the pestilence." In God's armoury there is no deficiency of weapons. Fire and hail, storm and tempest, plague and pestilence, famine and war, are all His instruments, &c. (b)

3. *The righteousness of the judgment.* They had despised the good land, and they shall not inherit it. They wished that they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness, and they shall have their wish—in the wilderness they shall die. They had shown themselves utterly unworthy of their inheritance, and it shall not be theirs. The righteousness of such a judgment is unquestionable. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways," &c. "All His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."

III. The Divine regard for His covenant.

"I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they."

In these words we see:

1. *God's regard for His covenant.* "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips." "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." He may cut off Israel, but He will not fail to carry out His plans. By sin we may violate our interest in the purposes of His grace; but we cannot frustrate their fulfilment.

2. *God's independence of man.* He could accomplish His designs without the aid of Israel. He needs not the support of any of His creatures. He Himself is the great sustainer of all creatures, and of all worlds. He can do without any of us, or without all of us. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him?" &c. (Rom. xi. 34-36).

3. *God's regard for His faithful servant.* See the honour which the Lord here puts upon Moses. (1) In announcing to him His purposes. He would not destroy this rebellious race until He had communicated with His faithful servant. Comp. Gen. xviii. 17-19: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" &c. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," &c. (2) In offering to him this extraordinary honour. "I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." "If

any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

Conclusion.

Impress such considerations as these :—

1. *The heinousness of unbelief;—shun it.*

2. *The large number and convincing character of the evidences of Christianity;—remember that our faith should bear*

a proportion to them. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," &c.

3. *God takes our conduct as evidence of our belief or unbelief;—let us show our faith by our works.* "Faith without works is dead," worthless, unreal. "Faith worketh by love," &c.

4. *Take heed lest we be disinherited because of unbelief.* Rom. xi. 20, 21; Heb. iii. 12—iv. 11.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The goodness of God is contemned by a distrust of His Providence. As all trust in Him supposeth Him good, so all distrust of Him supposeth Him evil; either without goodness to exert His power, or without power to display His goodness. Job seems to have a spice of this in His complaint (Job xxx. 20), "I cry unto Thee and Thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and Thou regardest me not." It is a fume of the serpent's venom, first breathed into man to suspect Him of cruelty, severity, regardlessness, even under the daily evidences of His good disposition: and it is ordinary not to believe Him when He speaks, nor credit Him when He acts; to question the goodness of His precepts, and misinterpret the kindness of His providence, as if they were designed for the supports of a tyranny and the deceit of the miserable. Thus the Israelites thought their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the placing them in security in the wilderness, was intended only to pound them up for a slaughter (Num. xiv. 3); thus they defiled the lustre of Divine goodness which they had so highly experimented, and placed not that confidence in Him which was due to so frequent a Benefactor, and thereby crucified the rich kindness of God, as Genebrard translates the word "limited" (Psa. lxxviii. 41). It is also a jealousy of Divine goodness, when we seek to deliver ourselves from our straits by unlawful ways, as though God had not kindness enough to deliver us without committing evil. What! did God make a world and all creatures in it, to think of them no more, not to concern Himself in their affairs? If He be good, He is diffusive, and delights to communicate Himself; and what subjects should there be for it but those that seek Him and implore His assistance? It is an indignity to Divine bounty to have such mean thoughts of it, that it should be of a nature contrary to that of His works, which, the better they are, the more diffusive they are. Doth a man distrust that the sun will not shine any more, or the earth not bring forth its fruit? Doth he distrust the goodness of an approved medicine for the expelling of his distemper? If we distrust those things, should we not render ourselves

ridiculous and sottish? And if we distrust the Creator of those things, do we not make ourselves contemners of His goodness? If His caring for us be a continual argument to move us to cast our care upon Him as it is (1 Pet. v. 7); then, if we cast not our care upon Him, it is a denial of His gracious care of us, as if He regarded not what becomes of us.—*Charnocke.*

A very tender parent had a son, who from his earliest years proved headstrong and dissolute. Conscious of the extent of his demerits, he dreaded and hated his parent. Meanwhile every means were used to disarm him of these suspicions, so unworthy of the tenderness and love which yearned in his father's bosom, and of all the kindness and forbearance which were lavished upon him. Eventually, the means appeared to be successful, and confidence, in a great degree, took the place of his ungenerous suspicions. Entertained in the family as one who had never trespassed, he now left his home to embark in mercantile affairs, and was assured that if in any extremity he would apply to his parent, he should find his application kindly received. In the course of years it fell out that he was reduced to extremity; but instead of communicating his case to his parent, his base suspicion and disbelief of his tenderness and care again occupied him, and he neglected to apply to him. Who can tell how deeply that father's heart was rent at such depravity of feeling? Yet this is the case of the believer, who, pardoned and accepted, and made partaker of a Father's love and covenant promises, when under distress refuses to trust his heavenly and almighty Parent, throws away his filial confidence, and with his old suspicions stands aloof in sullen distrust. O! how is God dishonoured by this sinful unbelief.—*Salter.*

(b) By His sovereign authority God can make any creature the instrument of His vengeance. He hath all the creatures at His beck, and can commission any of them to be a dreadful scourge. Strong winds and tempests fulfil His word (Psa. cxlviii. 8); the lightnings answer Him at His call, and cry aloud, "Here are we" (Job xxxviii. 35). By

His sovereign authority He can render locusts as mischievous as lions, forge the meanest creatures into swords and arrows, and commission the most despicable to be His executioners. He can cut off joy from our spirits, and make our own hearts to be our tormentors, our most confident friends our persecutors, our nearest relations to be His avengers; they are more His, who is their Sovereign, than ours, who place a vain confidence in them. Rather than Abraham shall want children, He can raise up stones, and adopt them into

His family; and rather than not execute His vengeance, He can array the stones in the streets, and make them His armed subjects against us. If He speak the word, a hair shall drop from our heads to choke us, or a vapour, congealed into rheum in our heads, shall drop down and putrefy our vitals. He can never want weapons, who is Sovereign over the thunders of heaven and stones of the earth, over every creature; and can, by a sovereign word, turn our greatest comforts into curses.—*Charnocke.*

THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES FOR THE DOOMED NATION.

(Verses 13-19.)

Moses does not appear to have entertained for a moment the proposal that a people greater and mightier than Israel, and arising from him, should take the place of Israel. He sought not his own honour, but the glory of God. And at once in broken speech, indicating a spirit deeply moved, he earnestly intercedes with God for the guilty and condemned people. His simple and earnest intercession requires very little explanation. Let us consider:—

I. The petition which he presented.

“Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people.” “The pardon of a national sin, as such, consists in the turning away of the national punishment; and that is it for which Moses is here so earnest.” His prayer is that God would not disinherit the guilty nation; that he would not kill all this people at a stroke; but that he would manifest His mercy in mitigating their doom.

II. The pleas by which he urged his petition.

1. *The honour of the Divine Name amongst the heathen.* “And Moses said unto the Lord: Then the Egyptians shall hear,” &c. Verses 13-16. (See *Critical and Explanatory Notes.*) The main points of this plea seem to be these: (1) The relations of God with Israel and His doings for Israel were well known amongst neighbouring nations. (2) If God should destroy Israel at a stroke, that also would be known amongst these nations. (3)

The interpretation of such destruction by the nations would be such as would reflect on the honour of God. They would conclude that His resources were exhausted; that His power had failed to sustain and lead Israel onward; and thus His glory would be tarnished. (4) That this might not be the case Moses entreats the Lord not to disinherit the rebellious people. This plea of the Divine honour in the eyes of the nations should afford both encouragement and exhortation to the Church of God. *Encouragement*, inasmuch as it implies that the glory of God amongst men is bound up with the prosperity of His Church. And *exhortation*, since it implies that it is the duty of every member of the Church to seek in all things the glory of His Name. (a)

2. *The Divine character as revealed to Moses.* “And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great,” &c. (Verses 17, 18); Comp. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Keil and Del.: “The words: Let the power be great, equivalent to show Thyself great in power, are not to be connected with what precedes, but with what follows; viz. ‘show Thyself mighty by verifying Thy word, Jehovah, long suffering and great in mercy,’ &c.” For a ruler to forgive on a large scale and wisely, and at the same time to uphold the authority of the law and the dignity of the throne, demands much *power*, and that of the highest kind. Excellent is Matthew

Henry's note on this point: "If He should destroy them God's power would be questioned; if He should continue and complete their salvation, notwithstanding the difficulties that arose, not only from the strength of their enemies, but from their own provocations, this would greatly magnify the Divine power; what cannot He do who could make so weak a people conquerors, and such an unworthy people favourites?" The servant of God pleads especially *the great mercy of God as manifested in His forbearance with sinners and His forgiveness of sin*. "The Lord is long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression." And his plea is strengthened by the fact that God has revealed Himself as exercising this mercy in such a way as to afford *no encouragement to evil*. "By no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." The Psalmist celebrates the same aspect of God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness: "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." How powerful is this plea! (b)

3. *The truth of the Divine word*. "Let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken." God had Himself proclaimed to Moses those attributes of His character which he pleads. So the man of God appeals to the Divine faithfulness. Surely God will maintain the character which He had Himself proclaimed! (c)

All the pleas which we have mentioned are based upon the doings and character and honour of God. No plea

is based upon anything in the people. Moses does not even urge their great need. But, like David, he entreats God to forgive for His own sake. "For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity." "The reason of our forgiveness is not in ourselves, but in God. The least sinner has no more right to the forgiveness of the least sin, than the greatest sinner has to the forgiveness of the greatest sin. Both must seek mercy, not because of any extenuating elements in themselves, but wholly and solely because God is 'the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' God's sovereign love originated salvation; God's sovereign love must get the glory of that salvation."

3. *The forgiveness which God had already bestowed*.

"Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, . . . as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now." This is bold pleading; but it puts great honour upon God. It would not do to make this a plea in asking anything of man. But "God makes past favours precedents for new ones."

"Man's plea to man is that he never more will beg; and that he never begged before. Man's plea to God is that he did obtain A former suit, and therefore sues again. How good a God we serve, who, when we sue, Makes His old gifts the examples of the new!" (d)

Conclusion.

From this intercession of Moses let us learn—

1. *How to plead with God for ourselves.*
2. *How to plead with God for others, and especially for His people.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The zeal of many rises and falls like a barometer. They are hot as fire, and cold as ice, in the shortest space; their fervour is as transient as the flame of thorns, and hence it is very hard to turn it to any practical account. Oh, for more of the deeply-seated principle of intense love to God's salvation, steady and abiding, which shall make a man say continually, "Let God be magnified!" We would desire to wake up in the morning with

this on our lips. We would begin with the enquiry, "What can I do to magnify God this day?" We would be in business in the middle of the day, and yet never lose the one desire to magnify God. We would return to our family at night, urged by the same impulse, "How can I magnify God in my household?" If I lie sick, I would feel that I must magnify God by patience; if I rise from that bed, I would feel the sweet obligation to

magnify Him by gratitude; if I take a prominent position, I am doubly bound to magnify Him who makes me a leader to His flock; and, if I be unknown and obscure in the Church, I must with equal zeal magnify Him by a conscientious discharge of the duties of my position. Oh, to have one end always before us, and to press forward towards it, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left! As though we were balls shot out of a rifled cannon, we would rush on, never hesitating or turning aside, but flying with all speed towards the centre of the target. May our spirits be impelled by a Divine energy towards this one only thing. The Lord be magnified! whether I live or die, may God be glorified in me!—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) Consider what it is for God to be glorious. It is the glory of pity unfathomable. He considers glory to lie in long-suffering love. It is not that He shoots the light of His countenance far as the sun shoots its beams, that makes God proud. It is because He knows how to work for men that are ungrateful, that His heart swells with consciousness of its power. It is not because He is able, as it were, by His hands to span easily the orbs that fill immensity. It is the glory of magnanimity; it is the glory of waiting upon imperfection and weakness; it is the glory of pardoning and healing, and pardoning again and healing again, and still continuing to pardon and heal to the uttermost and to the end—it is this that makes Divine glory. It is the power of God's heart to be magnanimous that makes Him think well of Himself. There lies His glory.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) Moses takes what God had said, next to what God is, as the ground and warrant of his plea and cry to Him for mercy and for forgiveness. What God has promised is given to us to be returned to Him in prayer. The meaning of promises is to suggest and be the language of prayer. Wherever you find a promise in the Bible, there you find the substance, the element, the words of prayer. "All the promises of God in Jesus Christ are Yea and Amen." They wait for you—dead in themselves on the sacred page—to seize them, translate them into prayer, and return them in that shape to Him who spake them, pleading with Him,—“O Lord, remember Thy power, as Thou hast promised us, saying, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” You can never need a prayer-book as long as you have a Bible. You can never plead that you cannot pray as long as you can open the book of Psalms, and see what God has promised; take those beautiful Psalms, which Martin Luther called “A little Bible,” and as you read them, turn their promises

into prayer. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” Turn that into prayer; and plead with God, that He will never let you want—that He will never forsake you and leave you—that He will be your rod and your staff—that He will furnish your table in the presence of your enemies—that He will let mercy and goodness follow you all the days of your life—and that you may dwell in His house for ever. Take promises so frequent, so full of power in all that can cheer, comfort, and sustain, scattered through every page of this blessed Book, and transmit them back to God in prayer, in the name of Christ Jesus.—*John Cumming, D.D.*

(d) It is a strange thing in human nature, that if anybody does you a kindness, you may forget him, and be ungrateful; but if you bestow a kindness on a person you will love him and remember him. It is not the receiver generally that is certain to give the love, it is the giver of kindness who binds himself to the other. A mother must love her child because she has done so much for it; she has suffered and she has cared so much, that she must love it. The more you have done for a person the better you love him. Now, Jesus does not love us because of any good in us, but to-day He loves us because He has done so much for us. He has taken the yoke from our necks, He has laid meat to us, He has drawn us with bands of love and cords of a man, and having spent so much love on us, He loves us dearly. Jesus, who suffered so much, is bound to us by new bonds. Calvary is not only the fruit of His love, but the root of fresh love. Another stream of love springs up at the cross' foot. “I,” saith the Redeemer, “can see My groans and agonies in them.” He loves us because He has loved us. This thought ought to cheer us—God has done too much for us to let us perish.

“And can He have taught me
To trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me
To put me to shame?”

C. H. Spurgeon.

The Rev. Philip Henry, after praying for two of his children who were dangerously ill, said, “If the Lord will be pleased to grant me this my request concerning my children, I will not say as the beggars at our door used to do, ‘I’ll never ask anything of Him again;’ but, on the contrary, he shall hear of me from me than ever; and I will love God the better as long as I live.”—*Dict. of Hist.*

GOD'S PARDONING GRACE IN THE PAST AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO SEEK FOR THE
SAME IN THE PRESENT.

(Verse 19).

"Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people . . . as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

The narrative from which the text is taken shews,—

2. *How apt we are to look at the dark side of things and to believe the bad before the good.*

3. *How unreasonable people are when angry.* "The children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron," when they knew that it was Jehovah who was leading them.

3. *How fearful it is to give way to and to nurse evil temper.* Here, having spent the night fostering bitter feeling, we find the people proposing to murder Joshua and Caleb. Man in a passion has for the time his reason dethroned, &c. The Bible condemns anger, shews it to be the essence of murder.

The text teaches, *That God's merciful dealings with us in the past, are encouragements for us to ask and to hope for the same in the present.* God does not change as we do; what He has done, He does now, and will do. His past treatment of us is an index to His future. History is a revelation of His character. God ever has forgiven, and He does so now. In this lies our only hope as sinners. We deserve not to be forgiven; we dare not hope for it time after time, were it not that God has forgiven until now, and that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This thought helped Moses to pray for the people. He had nothing to offer as an excuse for them; his only hope was in the known character of God. He had forgiven them again and again, and because of that Moses had faith to ask Him still to do so. We could not use this argument with any one but God. With our fellow-man we should feel,—“he has done it so often, I have no heart to ask him again.” But God gives that we

might still ask; every gift of His is an "earnest." No sinner need despair. Let him only think of the character of God, and he cannot sink. Is the sin great? God has "forgiven until now," and we have His word that "Whosoever will" may come to Him. It is more certain that God will forgive the penitent than that the sun and moon will rise in their appointed time. They have done so; we therefore conclude that they will continue to do so. God has forgiven in all ages; and in addition to that we have His Word. Let those who under a deep sense of guilt are trembling on the verge of despair, take heart. Go to God as you are, seek Him in Christ: He has "forgiven until now," and He will forgive. We argue this because,—

I. God is as able and as willing to forgive now as ever He has been.

"The Lord's hand is not shortened," &c. (Isa. lix. 1). His mercy is not exhausted. He has been giving to numberless ages; but he has lost nothing in imparting to others. Notice how the word *power* is associated with pardon and salvation. "Mighty to save;" "able to save;" "power of God unto salvation;" and here in verse 17, "Let the power," &c. It is not a trifling thing to save man. It is only the strong that can afford to forgive the rebel. God is great enough and strong enough to offer a free and full pardon to all who will accept it. Not only has He the power to forgive, but He is now as full of compassion as ever He has been. His heart is as tender as His arm is strong. None need fear to come to Him. If sin abounds, grace abounds much more. As the tide covers the rock as well as the grains of sand, so Divine mercy covers the sins of every penitent.

II. Man is now, as much as ever he has been, the object of God's compassion.

There has been no change in man's condition or deserts. We are no better or worse than others who have been forgiven. We, in this enlightened age, have not in any way ceased to need the mercy of God. We are helpless, full of sin, in great danger, &c. God knows this, and yearns for our salvation.

III. God's purpose with regard to the human race is now what it ever has been.

His purpose has been, and is, our salvation. This is near to His heart, &c. He gave His Son, &c. He has the same

motives and the same desire to pardon now as ever He has had.

Well, then, we can confidently invite *all*, ALL to Him. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Let none despair. He has forgiven through Christ "until now."

"Until now"! Let there be no misunderstanding. "Now is the accepted time." None of us have to-morrow; that belongs to God. All we have is this moment. Let it not be misused. Mercy is within reach. God forgives "until now."—*David Lloyd.*

THE ANSWER OF THE LORD TO THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES.

(Verses 20-25.)

In this reply we have—

I. Pardon in answer to prayer.

"And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." Moses had prayed that God would not cut off all the people at a stroke, but that He would pardon them; and God grants him his requests. "The answer of God," says Attersoll, "is to be referred to the prayer of Moses, and is proportioned out according to his request. He desired that God would not utterly root out that whole people as one man, according as He had threatened: his prayer is granted, and God declareth that He had pardoned them, not absolutely, but according to His word: he requested they might not utterly be destroyed, he receiveth answer, they shall not utterly be destroyed." Observe here:

1. *The great power of prayer.* "Pray one for another . . . The effectual fervent prayer," &c.

2. *The great mercy of God.* "He hath not dealt with us after our sins," &c. "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens." (a)

II. Punishment for aggravated sins.

1. *Their sin, and its aggravations.*

(1) They tempted God by their unbelief and disobedience. "Have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice." With a perversity which is almost incredible,

they questioned His power to provide for them and give them possession of the land, His goodness in His dealings with them, and His faithfulness as to the promises which He had made to them. They "tempted" and "provoked" Him by demanding signs and wonders as a proof of His power. Comp. Psa. lxxviii. 17-20. (2) They thus tempted God by their unbelief notwithstanding many and mighty encouragements to faith. "These men have seen My glory and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness." This was the great aggravation of their sin. (See notes on ver. 11). (3) They had been guilty of this sin many times. "These ten times." Some expositors enumerate ten occasions on which they had tempted God since their emancipation from Egypt. But we take it that "ten" is used here as the number of completeness, as in Gen. xxxi. 7. They had filled up the measure of their provocations; and now God will visit and punish them.

2. *Their punishment and its certainty.*

"As truly as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah, all those men . . . shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it." (1) The nature of their punishment. They had despised the good land, and they shall not

inherit it; they had distrusted His promise, and its blessings shall not be to them. "They shall not see the land," &c. Comp. *Psa. xcv. 11.* (2) The certainty of their punishment. God declares it with an oath. "As truly as I live," &c. He swears by His own existence, and by the certainty of the accomplishment of His purposes, that they shall not see the good land. Sure as He lives, and sure as, "notwithstanding the sin and opposition of these men, He would still carry out His work of salvation to a glorious victory," these men shall not enter into the Promised Land. Thus they were pardoned, but they were punished. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." Many of the consequences of sin are not annulled, cannot be annulled by forgiveness. (*b*)

III. Reward for eminent service.

"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit," &c. Caleb is here distinguished from the rest (*Joshua* is honourably named hereafter) in three respects:

1. *As to his spirit.* "He had another spirit with him," and a different one. His was a believing spirit, theirs an un-

believing one; his was courageous, theirs cowardly; his was obedient, theirs rebellious.

2. *As to his conduct.* "And hath followed Me fully." He had manifested unfaltering fidelity to God. (*c*)

3. *As to his destiny.* "Him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." Comp. *Josh. xiv. 6-15.*

IV. Judgment for cowardice.

"And now the Amalekites and the Canaanites are dwelling in the valley; wherefore, to-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." They had taken alarm when they heard of the Amalekites and the Canaanites (*chap. xiii. 29*), and shown themselves utterly unfit to encounter them: and now when they must advance to meet them or retreat into the wilderness, most naturally they are commanded to retreat. The life of struggle and enterprize and glory is not for cowards: it is for them to turn back from these things, and to wander ingloriously, ignobly, in the desert. Unto these cowards is awarded a coward's doom. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) Say not that any crime of man

Was e'er too great to be forgiven;

Can we within our little span,

Engrasp the viewless mind of Heav'n?

Shall we attempt with puny force

To lash back ocean with a rod?

Arrest the planets in their course?

Or weigh the mercies of a God?

Our mercies, like ourselves, may be

Small, finite, and ungracious ever;

May spurn a brother's bended knee—

But God forsakes the contrite, never!

Vast as Himself they shine above,

To eyes that look through sorrow's tear;

Great though the crime, great is the love,

If those who seek it are sincere.

Mackay.

(*b*) Men's sins carry with them a punishment in this life. Different sins are differently punished. The degrees of punishment are not always according to our estimate of the culpability. Many sins against a man's body go on in the body, reproducing their penalties

from year to year, and from ten years to ten years. And the ignorant crime, or the knowing crime, committed when one is yet in his minority, may repeat itself and repeat its bitterness and its penalty when one is hoary with age. Mere repenting of sin does not dispossess the power of all sins. There are transgressions that throw persons out of the pale of society. There are single acts, the penalties of which never fail to reassert themselves. There are single wrongs that are never healed. This great transgression that seemed in the commission without any threat and without any danger, pursued this man through all his early life, and clear down until he was an old man and returned from his exile. And now then he was quit of it only by one of those great critical transitions that take place, or may take place, in the life of a man, without which he would have gone on, doubtless, expiating still his great wrong.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Gay, dissolute man, there is that poor girl ruined body and soul through you in years gone by, and nothing you can ever do can undo that mischief. Could your tears for

ever flow, you can never unwrite the past nor restore the lost one. Could you bring that wandering soul back by Divine grace, even then the bitter past could not be unwritten, for she, too, has spread the poison. All that accursed past of sin must live on. God forgives sin, but much of the consequences of sin God Himself does not avert. If you light the fire it will burn on to the lowest hell; God may forgive your incendiarism, but the fire itself still continues. You spoke a word against the Lord Jesus in the ears of some youngster years gone by, which turned him aside from the right path. You cannot unsay it, and that youngster's infidelity and unbelief you cannot now destroy. The perpetual mischief which you have done to others might fitly be a reason with the Most High why He should not forgive you, but yet He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." With all

this before Him, with all the consequences of your sin before Him, He forgives you freely if you rest on Jesus.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) Is there anything we value amongst ourselves more than faithfulness, honesty, constancy—punctual, critical, scrupulous virtue? Do we not trust the faithful one? Do we not praise faithfulness above all other virtues when we are talking about relationships which subsist between us and amongst us? It is faithfulness that God values; not brilliance, not greatness, not astonishing, dazzling splendour, but reality, honour, honesty, diligence. Herein it is that the appeal of the Gospel comes to every man—to the man of great powers, and the man of the feeblest influence; to the man of the highest honour, and to the man of the remotest obscurity.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE EARTH FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

(Verses 20, 21.)

I. The import of the promise before us.

"As I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Glory is the manifestation of excellence. The glory of God is that display of His most blessed character and will which opens the way for His intelligent creatures to know, to love, and to obey Him. This glory is exhibited in various ways. It shines in all the works of *creation*; . . . is manifested by the works of His *providence*; . . . above all, in His works of *REDEMPTION*. Here all His perfections unite and harmonize, and shine with transcendent glory. Now, when the Gospel shall be preached and received throughout the world; when every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue shall not only be instructed in its sublime doctrines, but also brought under its benign and sanctifying power, then, with emphatic propriety, may it be said that "the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord." As the highest glory of which an individual creature is capable is to bear the image of his Maker, so the highest glory of which our world at large is capable is to be filled with the holy and benevolent Spirit of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person,—is to have the

knowledge and love of the Saviour reigning over all the populations of our globe, "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same." Such appears to be the import of the promise before us.

II. What reason have we for believing that these scenes will be one day realized?

1. *Our hope is founded on Jehovah's faithful and unerring promise* (Num. xxiii. 19; Matt. xxiv. 35). Take the following as a small specimen of the "exceeding great and precious" catalogue found in the inspired volume, —Ps. ii. 8; lxvii. 2; lxxii. 17; Isa. xl. 5; Hab. ii. 14; Zech. ix. 10; Mal. i. 11; Phil. ii. 10, 11; Rev. xi. 15.

2. *Our confidence is confirmed by the consideration that this religion is, in its nature, adapted above all others to be a universal religion.* Its doctrines, its worship, and its system of moral duty are all equally adapted to universality. Acts x. 34, 35; xvii. 26. It teaches that He is alike related to the children of men as their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; and that the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the monarch and the slave, all stand upon a level in His sight, and have all equal access, if penitent and believing, to the throne of His heavenly grace.

3. *The present aspect of the world furnishes much reason to hope that the accomplishment of this promise is drawing nigh.* I know not that there is at this hour a single portion of the globe to which the enlightened and prudent missionary may not obtain some degree of access. He who "sits as Governor among the nations" seems to be spreading a natural preparation around the world for the preaching of the Gospel among all nations.

Contemplate, further, the singular progress of various forms of improvement throughout the civilized world, all of which may be considered as bearing on the great promise contained in the text. The intercourse between different parts of the globe increasing every day with a rapidity and to an extent beyond all former precedent; the endless improvements in the means of conveyance from one part of the world to another; the wonderful improvements in the art of printing; and the many indications that the English language—the language of those parts of the world which are most favoured with Gospel light—will probably, ere long, become the prevailing language of the whole world.

III. What is our present duty in relation to the promise before us?

1. *To believe the promise.* Unbelief cuts the nerves of all spiritual exer-

tion, and tends to discouragement and despondency.

2. *To labour and pray without ceasing for its accomplishment.* There is no piety in the confidence which neglects prayer, and which does not add to prayer diligent effort to attain that for which it prays. God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of means.

3. *In labouring for the spread of the Gospel no adverse occurrence, however painful, ought to discourage us, or at all to weaken either our confidence or our efforts.* With that promise we may meet the most distressing difficulties without fear.

4. *To pray without ceasing for the power of the Holy Spirit to render all the means which are employed for its accomplishment effectual.* It is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah," that means are attended with a saving energy.

5. *If so great a work as evangelizing the whole world is promised, and is certainly to be accomplished, then our plans and efforts for promoting this object ought to bear a corresponding character; that is, they ought to be large, liberal, and ever expanding.* We ought to consider it as our duty to devote to this object our utmost resources, and to engage the co-operation of all over whom we exert an influence.—*Sam. Miller.*

CALEB—THE MAN FOR THE TIMES.

(Verse 24.)

There are three things about Caleb worthy of consideration:—

I. *His faithful following of his God.*

Perceive, *he never went before his God.* That is presumption. The highest point to which the true believer ever comes is to walk *with* God, but never to walk *before* Him. We ought to *follow* the Lord. The sheep follow the shepherd (John x. 4). They follow as the soldier follows the captain. . . . as the disciple follows the master. Caleb followed the Lord "*fully*," says one text, "*wholly*," says another. And here I

shall follow the explanation of good Matthew Henry.

1. He followed Him *universally, without dividing.* He did not wish to divide the commands; what God had joined together he did not desire to put asunder. Caleb was quite as ready to fight the giants as he was to carry the clusters. If you say concerning the Lord's will, "I will do this and I will not do that," you do in fact make yourself the master, the spirit of rebellion is in you. Some excuse themselves for neglecting duties on the ground that

they are non-essential—as if all duty was not essential to the perfect follower of Christ. “They are unimportant,” says the man, “they involve nothing;” whereas it often happens that the apparently unimportant duty is really the most important of all. Many a great lord, in the olden times, has given up his land on copyhold to his tenant, and perhaps the fee which was to be annually paid was to bring a small bird or a peppercorn to the lord of the manor—in some cases it has been the bringing of a turf or a green leaf. Now, if the tenant should on the annual day refuse to do his homage, and say it was too trifling a thing to bring a peppercorn to the lord of the manor in fee, would he not have forfeited his estate, for he would have been setting himself up as a superior owner, and asserting a right which his feudal lord would at once resist?

Brother, is there not some command which as yet you have not obeyed?

2. Caleb followed the Lord *sincerely, without dissembling*. One of the safest tests of sincerity is found in a willingness to suffer for the cause. How courageous was that man, who had only numbered forty summers, to put himself in opposition to the other ten princes, and declare in flat contradiction to them—“Let us go up; we are able to possess the land.” When the people took up stones, and Joshua was forced to speak with Caleb, it was with no small peril, and required no little mental courage to stand up amidst the insults and jeers of the crowd, and still to bring up a good report of the land. . . . How many profess to follow God who follow Him without their hearts!

3. Caleb followed the Lord *cheerfully, without disputing*. God requires no slaves to grace His throne; He is the Lord of the empire of love. God loveth to have the joyful obedience of His creatures. That obedience which is not cheerful is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart of a thing, and if He seeth that we serve Him from force, and not because we love Him, He will reject our offerings at our

hands. The service which is coupled with cheerfulness is hearty service, and therefore true. Cheerfulness, again, makes a man strong in service. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage.

Brother, do you serve the Lord cheerfully?

4. He followed the Lord *constantly, without declining*. Forty-five years he lived in the camp of Israel, but all that time he followed the Lord and never once consorted with murmuring rebels; and when his time came to claim his heritage at the age of eighty-five, the good old man is following the Lord fully; he shows a constant heart. How many professors fail in this respect! They follow the Lord by fits and starts, &c. But, to use the metaphor of Gotthold, we may compare Caleb to a tree. The wind had been blowing—it was a dreadful hurricane, and Gotthold walked into a forest and saw many trees torn up by the roots; he marvelled much at one tree which stood alone and yet had been unmoved in the tempest. He said, “How is this? The trees that were together have fallen, and this alone stands fast!” He observed that when the trees grow too closely they cannot send their roots into the earth; they lean too much upon each other; but this tree, standing alone, had space to thrust its roots into the earth, and lay hold on the rocks and stones, and so when the wind came it fell not. Caleb was constant, because he was a rooted man. He had a firm hold upon his God.

II. Caleb's favoured portion.

In reward for his faithful following of his Master,—

1. *His life was preserved in the hour of judgment*. The ten fell, smitten with plague, but Caleb lived. If he follows God fully, God will fully take care of him. Caleb is willing to give his life for his Master, and therefore his Master gives him his life.

2. Caleb was also comforted with a *long life of vigour*. At eighty-five he was as strong as at forty, and still able to face the giants. If there be a Christ-

ian man who shall have in his old age a vigour of faith and courage, it is the man who follows the Lord fully.

3. Caleb received *great honour among his brethren*. He was at least twenty years older than any other man in the camp except Joshua. At their council he would be regarded with as much reverence as Nestor in the assemblies of the Greeks; in their camps he would stand like another Achilles in the midst of the armies of Lacedaemon. As king and sire he dwelt among men. If we honour God, He will honour us (1 Sam. ii. 30).

4. Caleb was *put upon the hardest service*. That is always the lot of the most faithful servant of God. Caleb had the distinguished honour of being permitted to lead the van against the gigantic Anakim (Josh. xiv. 12; xv. 13, 14). Get your soul right, and you may defy the sharpest arrow of the adversary.

5. He had *the honour of enjoying what he had once seen*. He had only seen the land when he said, "We are able to take it." He lived not only to take it, but to enjoy it for himself. God does reward those who dare to do

hard things in confidence in His name.

6. Caleb *left a blessing to his children*. If there is any man who shall be able to leave his children the blessing of the upper and nether springs, it is the man who follows the Lord fully (Josh. xv. 13-19).

III. Caleb's secret character.

"He had another spirit with him,"—not only a bold, generous, noble, and heroic spirit, but the Spirit and influence of God which thus raised him above human inquietudes and earthly fears. Everything acts according to the spirit which is in it. The real way to make a new life is to receive a new spirit. The distinguishing mark of a right spirit is *faith*. Then a faithful spirit always begets a *meek* spirit, and a meek spirit always begets a *brave* spirit. The true believer has also a *loving* spirit a *zealous* spirit a *heavenly* spirit. Such a spirit had good Caleb. O that His Holy Spirit would lead us to go to Jesus just as we are, and look up to Him and beseech Him to fulfil that great covenant promise—"A new heart also will I give them, a right spirit will I put within them."—C. H. Spurgeon.

HOLY SINGULARITY DIVINELY HONOURED.

(Verse 24.)

In considering what is here recorded concerning Caleb, we may notice—

I. The relation he bore.

He was God's servant—a relation denoting that he acknowledged no other master, Matt. vi. 24; that he had his allotted work, Matt. xxi. 28; that he was not at liberty to govern himself, Deut. xii. 8; that he was to do all for God and His service, Rom. xiv. 8; that his employment was highly honourable, Psa. lxxxiv. 10.

II. The disposition he possessed.

"He had another spirit with him;"—a spirit altogether different from that of the rest of the spies,—the one being base, mean, sneaking, and cowardly; whilst the other inspired with courage and undaunted resolution (ver. 2-10;

Josh. xiv. 7, 8; 2 Cor. iv. 13). We may learn hence that all men must unavoidably be actuated by one spirit or another, in their different ways; that God perfectly knows what spirit is with us; and that a right spirit is of great and essential importance if we would secure the Divine approval.

III. The course he pursued.

He followed the Lord fully. To follow the Lord fully is to follow Him sincerely, without dissimulation; alone, without dividing; universally, without reserve; openly, without shame; fixedly, without instability; constantly, without weariness; submissively, without dictating; and confidently, without doubting.

IV. The recompense he obtained.

God brought him into the land of Canaan;—typical of heaven, the *better country* which God's people have ever sought, having earnest desires after its possession, as the dwelling-place of all their brethren, and as their Father's house.—*William Sleigh.*

I. Real Christians are actuated by a different spirit from that of the world.

II. Those who possess a right spirit will follow the Lord fully.

III. Those who follow the Lord fully shall be honourably distinguished by Him.—*G. Burder.*

THE SENTENCE OF GOD UPON THE SINFUL PEOPLE.

(Verses 26-39.)

The Divine judgment upon the rebellious people has already been declared in general terms to Moses (vers. 21-25). In this paragraph that judgment is pronounced in full to Moses and Aaron, for announcement to the people. We have spoken of the sin and punishment of the people in our notes on vers. 20-25; the additional suggestions introduced in this paragraph we will now endeavour to indicate, taking as our subject, *The sentence of God upon the sinful people.*

I. The sentence was conspicuously just.

Its justice is manifest—

1. *In the correspondence between the nature of the sin and the nature of the punishment.* They had disbelieved God's solemn and repeated promise to give them the land; they had shrunk as utter cowards from attempting to take possession of it; and God sentences them to exclusion from it. They had cried, "Would God that we had died in the wilderness!" and God takes them at their word; in the wilderness they shall die. The Divine punishment of sin ever answers in its nature to the sin itself. "Of what kind the sin is, of the same kind is the punishment (Gen. xlii. 21). David sinned greatly in numbering of the people, through the pride of his heart, and vain glory in his own greatness: God could have punished him many other ways, but He meeteth with him in the same kind, He diminisheth the number of his people exceedingly by the pestilence, in whose strength he much trusted." Comp. Judg. i. 6, 7; Jer. li. 56. The punishment of sin gene-

rally grows out of the sin itself. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," etc. (a)

2. *In the correspondence between the duration of the unbelieving exploration and the duration of the punishment.* "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." M. Henry: "They were content to wait forty days for the testimony of men, because they could not take God's word; and therefore justly are they kept forty years waiting for the performance of God's promise." Attersoll: "A year for a day. A dram of sin hath a pound of sorrow. A day of pleasure hath a year of pain."

3. *In the correspondence between the different degrees of guilt and the different severities of punishment.* The heaviest and sternest doom fell upon the ten unbelieving explorers, who were the greatest sinners. "The men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord." They were smitten by a sudden death which manifestly proceeded from Jehovah Himself. When God ariseth to judgment He distributeth punishment in proportion to the guilt of the offenders. Those who not only sin themselves but lead others into sin will have the sorest punishment. (b) Here is warning to those who tempt others to evil, and to those whose example leads others astray.

Repent; or you will be "beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47, 48; Heb. x. 28, 29). (c)

4. *In the exemption from punishment of those who had not shared in the guilt.* When the ten faithless explorers were smitten with sudden death by the Lord, Caleb and Joshua were spared. "Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of the men who went to search the land, lived." In like manner, those who had not joined in the murmuring and the rebellion were not excluded from the Promised Land. "Your little ones which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." Caleb and Joshua also were to enter and possess the good land. In His judgments God discriminates between the righteous and the wicked. Comp. Gen. xviii. 25.

But the innocent, though exempt from the punishment of the guilty, suffered privation and loss on account of their sins. "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness." So closely are we related to each other by national, social, and family ties, that the good cannot altogether escape the consequences of the sins of the wicked. "None of us liveth to himself." "We are members one of another." No one can sin without inflicting loss and injury upon others. "One sinner destroyeth much good." The innocent suffer with the guilty. Children still bear the sins of their parents. Very clearly is this the case with the children of the extravagant and wasteful, the drunken and the unchaste. Here is solemn admonition to parents. "If they love their sons, they must leave their sins, and walk in a careful obedience to the law of God. Wicked parents are the greatest enemies to their children."

II. The sentence was utterly irreversible.

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you . . . I the Lord

have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness shall they be consumed, and there they shall die." God forgives the sinners, but pronounces irreversible judgment against their sin. He pardons the rebels; but they shall not enter the Promised Land. The penalties of sin are certain. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Be sure your sin will find you out." "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." The punishment of sin is inevitable. Let no one go on presumptuously in wickedness imagining that he shall escape the penalties of his course. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." This is the extreme of folly; for though the execution of the sentence be delayed, nevertheless it is infallibly certain. What God hath said He will surely do. (d)

III. The sentence caused great sorrow.

"And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly."

1. *Their sorrow had a real and sufficient cause.* Only a little time previously they had mourned without any true reason (verse 1); but now they have sadly real and abundant reason for grief and tears.

2. *Their sorrow was not that of repentance, but of selfishness.* They mourned because of the punishment of sin, not because of the sin itself. "In the sorrow of the world," says F. W. Robertson, "the obliquity of the heart towards evil is not cured; it seems as if nothing cured it; heartache and trials come in vain; the history of life at last is what it was at first. The man is found erring where he erred before. The same course, begun with the certainty of the same desperate end which has taken place so often before. They have reaped the whirlwind, but they will again sow the wind." Such was the sorrow of the people at this time. Such mourning is never blessed; never issues in blessing.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) It pleaseth God to make His punishments answerable, and carrying a likeness with the sin for which it is inflicted; so that they are punished by that thing by which they have sinned against God. Covetous persons which get their goods by fraud and oppression, are themselves or their heirs many times oppressed and deceived, and brought to beggary. Gluttony, surfeiting, and drunkenness, are oftentimes punished with dropsies, and many gross and corrupt humours, distempering their bodies, and bringing them with speed to their graves. But these judgments belong only to the body, and do not stretch to the soul and conscience: nevertheless, the Lord ceaseth not to repay us even in this kind also, according to our sin. Hence it is, that He threateneth to send strong delusions upon men to believe lies, which will not receive and believe the truth (2 Thess. ii. 11); and they which will not believe wholesome doctrine, but having itching ears, get them an heap of teachers, shall turn their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables, and believe lies (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4).—*Atttersoll*.

(b) The makers of criminals are more guilty than the criminals that they make. They who lay the foundations for the destruction of men by inciting them to evil through their appetites and passions, are the architects of damnation in the world, and are the wickedest of men. Not the man that drinks, but the man who puts the cup to his neighbour's lips, is the most wicked. Not the man that steals, but the man who makes a haunt for the production of thieves, rears them, nourishes them,

and insures them, is the culprit—the arch-demon.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(c) The legend of St. Macarius of Alexandria, runs thus:—"One day, as Macarius wandered among those ancient Egyptian tombs wherein he had made himself a dwelling-place, he found the skull of a mummy, and, turning it over with his crutch, he inquired to whom it belonged; and it replied, 'To a pagan.' And Macarius, looking into the empty eyes, said, 'Where, then, is thy soul?' And the head replied, 'In hell,' Macarius asked, 'How deep?' And the head replied, 'The depth is greater than the distance from heaven to earth.' Then Macarius asked, 'Are there any deeper than thou art?' The skull replied, 'Yes; the Jews are deeper still.' And Macarius asked, 'Are there any deeper than the Jews?' To which the head replied, 'Yes, in sooth! for the Christians whom Jesus Christ hath redeemed, and who show in their actions that they despise His doctrine, are deeper still.'"—*Dict. of Illust.*

(d) The pea contains the vine and flower and the pod in embryo; and I am sure, when I plant it, that it will produce them, and nothing else. Now, every action of our lives is embryonic, and, according as it is right or wrong, it will surely bring forth the sweet flowers of joy, or the poison fruits of sorrow. Such is the constitution of this world; and the Bible assures us that the next world only carries it forward. Here and hereafter, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—*H. W. Beecher*.

For additional illustrations of the certainty of the punishment of sin, see pp. 89, 225, 258.

BASE MURMURING.

(Verse 27.)

No sin stands alone. Every sin is related to other sins, and frequently involves other sins. Such is the case with the sin of murmuring. It is not a simple sin, but involves—

1. *Presumption*. The murmurer regards his view as to how things ought to be, as superior to the Divine arrangements. Man murmuring, is folly arraigning infinite wisdom; it is like a glowworm grumbling at the sun.

2. *Ingratitude*. Blessings are depreciated and inconveniencies are exaggerated by the murmurer: in present difficulties he quite ignores past kindnesses. "Murmuring persons," says Dyer, "think everything done by them-

selves too much, and everything done for them too little."

3. *Rebellion*. The will of the murmurer is in a state of active antagonism to the holy will of God.

We have a mournful, but by no means a solitary example of murmuring mentioned in the text. Let us mark its conspicuous features as they are here indicated.

I. Murmuring without any cause.

The Israelites had much reason for thankfulness and praise; but none for complaint. They had been emancipated from Egyptian bondage by God; they were being graciously led, provisioned, and protected by Him; they were on

the borders of that excellent land which He had promised to give them; yet because of the false report of the cowardly spies they break forth into unrestrained murmuring against God, and against the leaders whom He had appointed.

Psalms of grateful praise would have been becoming in them; but ungrateful murmurings were utterly unbecoming and base. And still men murmur without any cause, except the ingratitude and discontent of their own souls. (a)

II. Murmuring against the Best Being.

"This evil congregation which murmur against Me." In vers. 2 it is said, "All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron." The Lord says, "They murmur against Me." Complaints made against the servants of God in the fulfilment of their appointed duties He regards as against Himself.

1. *Think who and what He is*,—the Supremely Wise and Good, &c.

2. *Think of what He had done for the Israelites, and what He has done for us*,—redeemed, guarded, sustained, &c.

3. *Think of what He had promised to them, and what He has promised to us*,—the continuance of His presence and support, victory over our enemies, the possession of a glorious inheritance, &c. How heinously base, then, is it to murmur against Him! to murmur against Him who in Himself is perfect, and who is our great Benefactor! Yet all our complaints as to our circumstances, our duties, our lot in life, are murmurings against Him.

III. Murmuring of long continuance.

"How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against Me?" Murmuring had become chronic

with this generation of the Israelites. There are many to-day who are habitual grumblers; murmuring is not an occasional and infrequent thing with them, but a constant mood which is more or less manifest in all their speech. (b) How great is their sin! How great also is the patience of God with them!

IV. Murmuring known to God.

"I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me." God hears every bitter complaint, whether uttered in loud wailings or soft whispers; He perceives every unthankful and rebellious mood of the spirit. Consider this, ye murmurers, and be shamed, and be warned!

V. Murmuring punished by God.

These Israelite murmurers were excluded from the Promised Land. The murmurer excludes himself from the Canaan of joy and peace and contentment. Murmuring is a self-punishing sin. God has made it so. Murmuring is misery. The murmurer is his own tormentor. (c)

Let us endeavour to conquer and avoid this evil by cultivating a spirit of thankfulness and contentment.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied?
And hearts in poorest huts admire
How love has in their aid
(Love that not ever seems to tire)
Such rich provision made,"

Archbishop Trench.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In a love-feast in Yorkshire, a good man had been drawing out a long complaining strain of experiences about his difficulties and trials on the way to heaven. Another, of a different spirit, followed, who said, "I see our brother who has just sat down lives in Grumb-

ling Street. I lived there myself for some time, and never enjoyed good health. The air was bad, the house bad, the water bad; the birds never came and sung in the street; and I was gloomy and sad enough. But I 'flitted.' I got into Thanksgiving Street;

and ever since then I have had good health, and so have my family. The air is pure, the water pure, the house good; the sun shines on it all day; the birds are always singing; and I am as happy as I can live. Now, I recommend our brother to 'flit.' There are plenty of houses to let in Thanksgiving Street; and I am sure he will find himself a new man if he will only come; and I will be right glad to have him for a neighbour."—*Dict. of Illust.*

(b) Some people are always "out of sorts." The weather is always just what they don't want. I met one of these men a while ago, a farmer, who raised all manner of crops. It was a wet day, and I said, "Mr. Nayling,

this rain will be fine for your grass crop."—"Yes, perhaps; but it is bad for the corn, and will keep it back. I don't believe we shall have a crop." A few days after this when the sun was shining hot, I said, "Fine sun for your corn, sir."—"Yes, pretty fair; but it's awful for the rye. Rye wants cold weather." Again: on a cold morning I met my neighbour, and said, "This must be capital for your rye, Mr. Nayling."—"Yes; but it is the very worst weather for the corn and grass. They want heat to bring them forward."—*Dr. Todd.*

(c) For an illustration of this point see p. 247.

A PRESUMPTUOUS ENTERPRISE AND ITS DISASTROUS TERMINATION.

(Verses 40-45.)

We have in these verses an illustration of—

First: *The sad perversity of sinful human nature.* The children of Israel seemed determined to walk contrary to God. When He said, "Go, and possess the land," they disobeyed, saying, "Let us return into Egypt." And now that He says, "Ye shall not come into the land," they say, "Lo, we will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised." "When they should go forward," says Attersoll, "then they will go backward and make them a captain to conduct them into Egypt. When they should go backward, then they will go forward, though they perish for it. This is our corrupt nature. That which God willeth us to do, we will not do; and that which He willeth us not to do, that we will do; whereby we see that the lusts of the flesh are enmity against God."

Second: *The confession of sin and persistence in sin.* "We have sinned," said the Israelites, and in the same breath they propose to sin again. They were not penitent for their sin; they do not seem at all conscious of that unbelief which was their great sin, and the prolific parent of so many other sins. When God said that He would give them the land, they did not believe Him; and now He says that they shall not enter the land, they do not believe Him. Then they sinned by their unbelieving despair; now they sin by

their presumptuous self-confidence. "Man is ever supposing," says Dr. A. Clarke, "he can either do all things, or do nothing; he is therefore sometimes presumptuous, and at other times in despair." The people cried, "We have sinned," and at once proceeded to sin again in another form. How many of us bear a close resemblance to them in this respect! (a)

Third: *The great difficulty of walking humbly and patiently in the path which our sins has rendered necessary for us.* The unbelief of the Israelites had rendered it necessary that they should be ordered back into the wilderness, and against this they rebelled; they would go forward, not backward. So with us. We rebel against God, or fail to enter into His purposes concerning us; and when suffering and loss follow, we fail to see in them the just and natural consequences of our sin; and, instead of humbly submitting to them, we blame circumstances or find fault with Providence, and presumptuously rebel against the Divine order.

Now let us turn to the main subject of this paragraph, and consider—

I. The presumptuous enterprise.

In the narrative as given both here and in Deut. i. 41-45, their presumption is mentioned. Their presumption is seen in that they went forth—

1. *In opposition to the command of the Lord.* "And the Lord said, To-morrow turn you and get you into the wilder-

ness by the way of the Red Sea. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land," &c. "And they rose up early in the morning, and got them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and we will go up into the place which the Lord hath promised." The enterprise which is forbidden by God cannot possibly under any circumstances be either wise or right.

2. *Despite the remonstrance of Moses.* Being acquainted with their purpose, Moses points out to them (1) The sin of their proposal. "And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord?" (2) The peril of their proposal. "It shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword." To firm believers in God, the taking of the land would have been a question between the Lord and the heathen nations of Canaan. But by their unbelief the Israelites had made it a question between themselves and the Canaanites; and, without the Divine Presence, the Israelites were not a match for the Canaanites. (3) The reason of their peril. "The Lord is not among you Because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you." The presence of God with His people is the secret of their strength and victory. Comp. 2 Chron. xx. 15, 17. But sin strips us of the consciousness of His Presence, despoils us of calmness and courage, withdraws from us our defence, and leaves us an easy prey to our enemies. Thus Moses remonstrated with them; "but they presumed to go up unto the hill top."

3. *Without the symbol of the Divine Presence and the presence of the Divinely-appointed leader.* "Nevertheless the Ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses departed not out of the camp." Moses would not countenance their enterprise in any way or in any degree whatsoever. But they despised all remonstrances and counsels and expressions of disapproval; and they set out

to "go up unto the place which the Lord had promised."

II. The disastrous termination of this presumptuous enterprise. "Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, unto Hormah." Their presumptuous enterprise ends in—

1. *Disgraceful defeat.* They had said, "We will go up and fight; We will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised." And they went out; but returned more quickly than they went; for the Canaanites which dwelt in that mountain, came out against them, and chased them, as bees do, unto Hormah (Deut. i. 44). They did not fight like men; but fled like cowards. Their defeat was ignominious. (b)

2. *Sore slaughter.* The Canaanites "smote them and discomfited them;" . . . "and destroyed them in Seir." They were defeated with severe loss of men. Already they are beginning to bring about the fulfilment of the Divine sentence, that their carcases should fall in the wilderness.

3. *Bitter sorrow.* "And ye returned and wept before the Lord." How prone these people were to weep. Shallow hearts perhaps weep most. There was nothing noble or commendable in these tears. They were the expressions of disappointment and cowardice, and were as fruitless as they were bitter; for "the Lord would not hearken to their voice, nor give ear unto them."

Conclusion.

From the whole let us learn the sin and the folly of entering upon any enterprises, and especially difficult ones, in our own strength. "Apart from me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing." This is applicable to—

1. *Spiritual life in its origin and progress.* The attempt in our own strength to lead a religious, godly life, is sure to end in sad disappointment and utter failure. (c)

2. *Spiritual conflict.* Unless we take to ourselves "the whole armour of God," our spiritual foes will be too

many and too mighty for us. We can conquer only through Christ.

3. *Spiritual service.* Our efforts to benefit our fellow men will succeed

only as they are made in reliance upon the blessing of God. We can bless others only as He blesses us. Comp. 1 Cor. iii. 5-7.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) How many a hardened rebel on ship-board, when the timbers are strained and creaking, when the mast is broken, and the ship is drifting before the gale, when the hungry waves are opening their mouths to swallow up the ship alive and quick as those that go into the pit—how many an hardened sailor has then bowed his knee, with tears in his eyes, and cried, “I have sinned!” But of what avail and of what value was his confession? The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm; that repentance of his that was begotten amidst the thunder and the lightning, ceased so soon as all was hushed in quiet, and the man who was a pious mariner when on board ship, became the most wicked and abominable of sailors when he placed his foot on *terra firma*. How often, too, have we seen this in a storm of thunder and lightning! Many a man’s cheek is blanched when he hears the thunder rolling; and the tears start to his eyes, and he cries, “O God, I have sinned!” while the rafters of his house are shaking, and the very ground beneath him reeling at the voice of God which is full of majesty. But alas, for such a repentance! When the sun again shines, and the black clouds are withdrawn, sin comes again upon the man, and he becomes worse than before. How many of the same sort of confessions, too, have we seen in times of cholera, and fever, and pestilence! Then our churches have been crammed with hearers, who, because so many funerals have passed their doors, or so many have died in the street, could not refrain from going up to God’s house to confess their sins. And under that visitation, when one, two, and three have been lying dead in the house, or next door, how many have thought they would really turn to God! But, alas! when the pestilence had done its work, conviction ceased; and when the bell had tolled the last time for a death caused by cholera, then their hearts ceased to beat with penitence, and their tears did flow no more. . . . It is of no use for you to say, “I have sinned,” merely under the influence of terror,

and then to forget it afterwards.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) A noble ship was bearing into port. It was the evening hour, and too late to enter without a pilot. There were two passages into the harbour; one a dangerous narrow channel, the other a wide and safe one. The captain determined to pilot himself by the narrow passage. A storm was coming up; and the passengers, with fear and consternation, begged him to take the wider channel. He laughed at their cowardice, and swore he would do as he pleased. As the night advanced, the gale increased. Soon rose a cry, “*Breakers ahead, breakers ahead!*” The captain flew to the wheel; the sails were struck; the wind had the mastery; and the captain found a will that could defy his own. The vessel made a fearful plunge, struck the foreship deep into the sand, to be shattered by the wild waves’ pleasure. Few survived the terrors of that fearful night; but among the dead thrown up by the rising tide was the body of the wilful and presumptuous captain.—*Dict. of Illust.*

(c) There is not a daisy that was not organised to be a daisy, but I should like to see one that did not have the sun to help it up from the seed; there is not an aster that was not organised to be an aster, but where is there one that grew independent of the sun? What the sun is to flowers, that the Holy Ghost must be to our hearts, if we would be Christians. If there is a man who can be a Christian without the help of God, he has a heart such as I never knew a person to have. I never seek to put down wicked thoughts and incite good ones without feeling that if God does not help me I shall not succeed. And here we come to the very bosom of the truth I am enforcing, for what God commands us to be, that He is Himself, and when we need help in our Christian course, He stands ready, of all others, to help us, working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.—*H. W. Beecher.*

CHAPTER XV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this and the next four chapters we have a narrative of certain occurrences and enactments during the penal wandering in the desert, which

lasted for nearly thirty-eight years. The relation of these chapters to the history is well expressed by Keil and Del. in this note: “After the unhappy

issue of the attempt to penetrate into Canaan, in opposition to the will of God and the advice of Moses, the Israelites remained 'many days' in Kadesh, as the Lord did not hearken to their lamentations concerning the defeat which they had suffered at the hands of the Canaanites and Amalekites. Then they turned, and took their journey, as the Lord had commanded (chap. xiv. 25), into the wilderness, in the direction towards the Red Sea (Deut. i. 45; ii. 1); and in the first month of the fortieth year they came again into the desert of Zin, to Kadesh (chap. xx. 1). All that we know respecting this journeying from Kadesh into the wilderness in the direction towards the Red Sea, and up to the time of their return to the desert of Zin, is limited to a number of names of places of encampment given in the list of journeying stages in chap. xxxiii. 19-30, out of which, as the situation of the majority of them is altogether unknown, or at all events has not yet been determined, no connected account of the journeys of Israel during this interval of thirty-seven years can possibly be drawn. The most important event related in connection with this period is the rebellion of the company of Korah against Moses and Aaron, and the re-establishment of the Aaronic priesthood and confirmation of their rights, which this occasioned (chaps. xvi.-xviii.). The rebellion probably occurred in the first portion of the period in question. In addition to this there are only a few laws recorded, which were issued during this long time of punishment, and furnished a practical proof of the continuance of the covenant which the Lord had made with the nation of Israel at Sinai. There was nothing more to record in connection with these thirty-seven years, which formed the *second* stage in the guidance of Israel through the desert. For, as *Baumgarten* has well observed, the fighting men of Israel had fallen under the judgment of Jehovah, and the sacred history, therefore, was no longer concerned with them; whilst the

youth, in whom the life and hope of Israel were preserved, had as yet no history at all."

In this chapter certain regulations concerning certain offerings and observances are laid down.

Verse 4. On the *meat offering* comp. Lev. ii.

Verse 14. *A stranger*. "There were two sorts of strangers among the Israelites; some that entirely embraced and professed the Jewish religion, into which they were admitted by circumcision, &c; others that lived among them by permission, having renounced all idolatry, but did not submit to their whole religion. The former sort are understood to be meant here.—*Bp. Patrick*.

Verse 15. *One ordinance*, &c. Keil and Del. translate: "'As for the assembly, there shall be one law for the Israelite and the stranger, . . . an eternal ordinance . . . before Jehovah.'

הִתְקַבֵּל, which is construed absolutely, refers to the assembling of the nation before Jehovah, or to the congregation viewed in its attitude with regard to God."

As ye are, so shall the stranger be, &c. "The meaning is, 'as with you, so shall it be with the stranger,' &c."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 17-21. The ordinances here prescribed are based upon the general principle stated in Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 19.

Verse 20. *Dough*. *עֲרִיסַת*, is only used in Neh. x. 37; Ezek. xliv. 30, and in both places the reference is to this ordinance. Keil and Del. say that the word "signifies most probably groats, or meal coarsely bruised." Fuerst, however, regards the old interpretation, *dough* or *mixed dough*, as the more probable.

Verse 24. *By ignorance without the knowledge*, &c. Lit., as in margin, "By ignorance from the eyes of," &c. Keil and Del.: "If it occur away from the eyes of the congregation through error."

According to the manner. Margin : "According to the ordinance." H. E. J. Howard : "According to the appointment."

Verse 26. *Seeing all the people were in ignorance.* Keil and Del. : "'For' (sc. it has happened) 'to the whole nation in mistake.'" Howard : "For to all the people (it was) unintentional."

Verse 30. *Presumptuously.* Margin : "With an high hand." Fuerst : "With a raised hand;" raised "as a sign of presumption."

Reproacheth the Lord. Translate, "Blasphemeth the Lord." Keil and Del. : "Whoever committeth a sin 'with a high hand,'—i.e., so that he raised his hand, as it were, against Jehovah, or acted in open rebellion against Him,—blasphemed God, and was to be cut off (see Gen. xvii. 14); for he had despised the word of Jehovah, and broken His commandment, and was to atone for it with his life."

Verse 31. *His iniquity shall be upon him.* Howard : "Its sin (is) in it." Keil and Del. : "'Its crime upon it;' i.e., it shall come upon such a soul in the punishment which it shall endure."

Verse 34. *Because it was not declared,* &c. It had already been determined that Sabbath-breaking should be punished by death (Exod. xxxi. 14, 15); but the mode of death was not declared.

Verse 35. *The man shall be surely put to death.* "For as no fire was to be made throughout their habitations on a Sabbath day (Exod. xxxv. 2, 3), gathering sticks for such a purpose was a work that was a violation of the Sabbath, punishable with death."—*Dr. Gill.*

Verse 38. The outer garment of the Hebrews was a quadrangular piece of cloth. They are here commanded to wear fringes or tassels at the corners of this garment, and to fasten the tassels to the edge of the garment by a riband or thread of a deep blue colour. This riband or thread of blue was designed to remind them of the commandments of the Lord, and of their obligation to keep them.

Verse 39. *That ye seek not.* *Speaker's Comm.* : "That ye wander not." Keil and Del. : "And ye shall not stray after," &c.

PROPRIETY IN WORSHIP.

(Verses 1-16.)

In this paragraph we have certain instructions as to the offering of sacrifices, when the people had entered into the Promised Land. These instructions are supplementary to the laws concerning sacrifices which had already been promulgated. Let us consider—

I. The gracious intimation.

"When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you."

We know not at what time during their long wanderings, these directions were given unto them; but the place which they occupy in the history is significant and suggestive. Immediately after the record of the sentence of death in the wilderness, which was passed upon the generation of rebels, these instructions are inserted which

graciously intimate that another generation should possess the good land. This intimation was eminently calculated to promote their—

1. *Encouragement.* It assures them that, notwithstanding the sin of the parents, their children should not be disinherited; and this assurance would be to them a pledge of the renewal of the favour of God to them. These would animate and cheer them in their tedious wanderings in the desert.

2. *Instruction.* Here they are taught that, notwithstanding all the unfaithfulness and rebellion of man, God "abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." We may by our sin exclude ourselves from the enjoyment of the privileges promised to the people of God; but we cannot prevent the fulfil-

ment of those promises, or frustrate the Divine purposes. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."

II. The directions concerning the worship of God. (Vers. 3-12).

1. *The perpetual obligation of worship* is here implied. These instructions concerning worship are spoken of as "an ordinance for ever in your generations." (1) Man's need of worship is permanent. Human nature can never outgrow its need of worship. The higher man rises in the scale of being, the more reverently he adores the Holy One. (2) God's worthiness to receive worship is permanent. He is eternally and unchangeably the Supremely and Infinitely Perfect, the Supremely and Infinitely Beautiful. Hence the perpetual obligation of worship.

2. *That man must approach God through sacrifice* is also implied in the text. Man's consciousness of sin is the reason of this need. Feeling our guiltiness, we are afraid to approach unto the Being of perfect holiness against whom we have sinned. We draw near to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the great Sin Offering (John xiv. 6). He removes our suspicions concerning God, and banishes our guilty fears, and brings us near to Him. "God hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ," &c. (2 Cor. v. 18, 19). But the chief teaching of these directions is this—

3. *In the offerings which we present to God, proper proportions should be observed.* These proportions are stated in the text. "If the sacrifice was a lamb or a kid, then the meat offering must be a tenth-deal of flour, that is an omer, which contained about five pints; this must be mingled with oil, the fourth part of a hin (a hin contained about five quarts), and the drink offering must be the same quantity of wine, about a quart and half a pint," (vers. 3-5). If it was a ram, the meat offering was doubled, two tenth-deals of flour, about five quarts, and a third part of a hin of oil (which was to them as butter is to us) mingled with it; and the same quantity of wine for a drink offering

(vers. 6, 7.) If the sacrifice was a bullock, the meat-offering was to be trebled, three omers, with five pints of oil, and the same quantity of wine for a drink-offering (vers. 8-10). And thus for each sacrifice, whether offered by a particular person or at the common charge." The principle seems to be this, that there should be order and congruity in the services which we offer to God; everything connected with the worship of God should be appropriate and harmonious. This principle may be applied to (1) The edifices for Divine worship. (a). (2) The exercises of Divine worship. (b). (3) The great sacrifice for us and our offerings to God. "God gave His only begotten Son." "He spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Then we should give ourselves unreservedly to Him. Comp. Rom. xii. 1.

III. The pleasure of God in the worship of His people.

Five times in this paragraph we meet with the words, "A sweet savour unto the Lord" (vers. 3, 7, 10, 13, 14). The words express the pleasure which God takes in the true worship of His people. For what reasons does God delight in His people's worship?

1. *Because the feelings which find expression in true worship are good and beautiful.* The sin-offering was designed to express the penitence, the meat-offering the gratitude, and the burnt-offering the self-consecration of the worshippers; and penitence, gratitude, and consecration of self to God are good and becoming in us, beneficial to us, and well-pleasing to God.

2. *Because worship is essential to the education and progress of His creatures.* Without worship the noblest capacities and faculties of our nature remain undeveloped. Gratitude, humility, admiration, adoration, aspiration, these are worship; and without these our spirits cannot grow, cannot even live in any worthy sense. True worship transforms the worshipper into the image of the object worshipped. Hence the worship of the Lord God exalts, purifies, enriches, strengthens the worshipper. "It is

good to give thanks unto the Lord," &c. (c)

3. *Because these sacrifices were types of the perfect Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.* The sacrifices offered under the ceremonial law pointed onward to Christ Jesus, and found their consummation in His glorious self-sacrifice. In the sublime self-devotion of that sacrifice, in the unspeakable love which it so eloquently expresses, and in the hearty obedience even unto death, we have the highest worship. As Thomas Carlyle says, "O brother, if this is not 'worship,' then I say, the more pity for worship; for this is the noblest thing yet discovered under God's sky." For these reasons the offerings of His people are "a sweet savour unto the Lord," and in their worship He takes delight.

IV. The directions concerning the stranger sojourning with the Israelites.

"All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner,"

&c. (vers. 13-16). Before the Lord and in the exercises of worship, the Israelite had no advantage over the stranger; there was one law for both, and one ordinance. This arrangement would tend—

1. *To check exclusiveness and pride among the Israelites.* It was eminently calculated to suppress the risings of spiritual pride and pride of race to which they were so prone (John viii. 33, 39).

2. *To encourage the Israelites in the humane treatment of foreigners.* They are here taught that if the foreigner were willing to adopt their religion, they were to receive him with kindness, &c.

3. *To encourage the Gentiles to unite in the worship and service of the Lord God.*

4. *To foreshadow the universality of the Christian Church.* Comp. John iii. 14-17; Acts x. 34, 35; xvii. 26-28; Gal. iii. 7-9, 14, 22, 26-29; Rev. xxii. 17.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Excess of material circumstance in spiritual worship, whether of architectural adornment, ritual ceremony, musical elaboration, or even intellectual fastidiousness, is as injurious to it as is over-cumbersome machinery in manufacture, excess of ceremonial in social life, superfluous raiment to personal activity, or gaudy ornamentation to personal grace. It is both injurious to life and offensive to taste. But equally so, on the other hand, is penuriousness and nakedness. If we may not overlay spiritual life, neither may we denude it. The true law of life is that its energies be developed in all the force and with all the beauty of which they are capable, and that it worship with such cultured adornment as in the highest degree may appeal to and express its own spiritual emotions. This is the simple law and the sufficient test of all artistic appliances. Is any particular culture conducive to the worshipping heart of the congregation? If not, and still more if it be injurious to it, then no matter how beautiful in itself it may be—how conducive to the profit and joy of other congregations—however sanctioned by history and contemporary use—let it be rejected, and, if needful, let it be dealt with as the serpent of brass which Hozekiah destroyed and pronounced to be "Nehushtan."—H. Allon, D.D.

(b) In the Temple service there was not only the Holy Sacrifice and the fragrant incense, but the golden altar, and the richly-robed priest—not only the holy song, but the

rich poetry of David's psalms, and the cultured music of the sons of Asaph and Korah. In every allusion of the psalmists, as well as in every record of the historian, we feel the implications of an earnest reverential manner. What special spirituality can there be in the pious doggerel of hymns, or in the rude incongruities of tunes? Why should it be necessary to abjure all culture and exorcise all taste, in order that piety may have its supreme enjoyment? It is true that worship does not consist in artistic song, but neither does it in inharmonious doggerel. While the essence of all worship must ever lie in the true and fervent expression of spiritual feeling, the reverence which constitutes the perfection of such feeling demands that worship be clothed with every beauty that can adorn, with every appliance that can enhance it, so that in God's sanctuary there may be beauty as well as strength; for beauty is the comely costume of strength. Strength bedizened is not beauty, neither is strength denuded, but strength clothed in rich but yet unobtrusive garments. It is surely a careless if not a scornful disparagement of the service of the Church, to be contented with rude, inharmonious song in it, while we bestow upon our drawing-room song and our music-hall concerts our highest artistic culture and care. No genuine piety can excuse negligence; by its very negligence it will testify to its own defects. Everything pertaining to worship should surely indicate a reverent solicitude to bring to God

the best that we can proffer—an offering perfect in every appliance that can give emphasis to its adoration; intensify its rapture, or beautify its love. Hence the devoutest worshippers will provide for their praise hymns of the highest poetry, and music of the richest harmony.—*Ibid.*

(c) He who worships the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, must, in all the qualities of his soul, in all the relations of his life, be a *better* man than the atheist, than the man who denies the existence of God. The man who worships a stone is a better man than he who worships nothing. The man who falls down before carven wood, or worships the beasts of the field, is a grander nature than he who never bows his head in prayer, and never lifts up his heart in aspiration and religious desire. The tendency of worship is to elevate our nature. He who worships sincerely, however ignorantly, is the better for his worship; he is enlarged in his nature, his outlook upon things is widened, he is led away from self-trust, and is taught to depend upon a power, not lower, but higher, and in his estimation better, than his own.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

The worship of praise is the supreme act of intercourse between God and the creature. We gather into it all the elements of our complex nature, our intellect, conscience, religious emotion and physical faculty,—and engage them in a great religious service; and thus we realize the noblest fellowship with the Creator that is possible to a creature. In other

ways also we have fellowship with God; in prayer, when we come to Him to ask the supply of our need; in meditation, when we muse upon His excellencies, or rest in the quiet assurance of His love; and in service, when we enter into His purposes, and as “workers together with God” consecrate ourselves to the accomplishment of them; but in praise, our fellowship with God is far higher than in any other; the personal want that prompts prayer is forgotten; the anxious thought that ponders Divine mysteries is banished; the strenuous toil that wearies even the consecrated hand is suspended; and we lift up the face of our worship to the light and glory of God’s great love. Absorbed and blessed in the sense of His Divine excellencies, we stand before Him as the angels do; our reverence and love are quickened into adoring rapture, and we utter our reverent estimate of what He is, in the largest and most rapturous words that we can find. Such worship God graciously accepts; all natures that love crave love, and the loving God supremely craves the love of His creatures. Else would our worship be chilled and driven back into our own hearts. We speak to Him our admiration and praise because He graciously listens to it and joyously accepts it. We look up with gladness into the face of our Father in Heaven, because He responds to our loving rapture with His,—His Divine heart answers the love of our poor human hearts,—“God is love,” and He *seeketh* loving souls to worship Him.—*H. Allon, D.D.*

AIMS AT PERFECTION.

(Verse 12.)

Here we have the doctrine enforced, that what is done should be well done.

I. Attention to the greater does not excuse neglect of the less (Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xi. 42).

II. Obedience in the greater matters tested, as to sincerity, by obedience in the lesser details of ceremonial observance (Matt. xxv. 21; Luke xvi. 10.)

III. The offering up of the great sacrifice for sin does not liberate us from the duty of offering, on our part, the lesser sacrifice of faith, &c. (2 Cor. v. 15; Rom. xii. 1.)

IV. The offering of the less manifests our appreciation of the greater.—*Biblical Museum.*

THE OFFERING OF THE FIRST OF THE DOUGH.

(Verses 17-21.)

We have here an application of the law of the firstfruits, which is laid down in Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 19. Other applications of the law we find in Lev. ii. 12-14; xxiii. 10, 11, 14, 17. At a later period other directions were

given concerning the observance of this law (Deut. xxvi. 1-11).

The command here is that of the first dough made of the first corn that was threshed, winnowed, and ground, they were to take to the priest a cake

as a heave-offering unto the Lord. The size of the cake is not specified, but was left to the generosity of the offerer. In this offering we have—

I. An expression of gratitude.

In presenting the firstfruits to the Lord the Israelites acknowledged that they owed everything to Him. Very clearly this is brought out in the confession of the offerer of the basket of firstfruits (Deut. xxvi. 1-11). The offering was an expression of gratitude to Him for His bounty and beneficence. All the good that we possess we have received from Him. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," &c. We have received countless and priceless benefits from Him. Seeing that all good comes from God two conclusions are irresistible:

1. *That all good should be accepted and enjoyed gratefully.* "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" Very great should be our gratitude to Him. (*a*)

2. *That all good should be employed in accordance with His holy will.* We must guard against the abuse of any of His gifts; for He will require of us an account of them. Gratitude for our blessings urges us to use them in such a way as shall please Him—to use them for His glory.

II. An acknowledgment of dependence.

In offering the first of their dough after they entered the Promised Land they confessed their continued dependence upon Him. Very clearly and impressively Moses enjoined upon the Israelites that they should reverently remember the Lord their God, and humbly acknowledge their dependence upon Him after they entered the good Land (Deut. viii. 10-20). We too are constantly dependent upon God for all things. He is the one great Fountain

of all physical, mental, and spiritual good. "All our springs are in Him." (*b*)

Seeing that we are thus absolutely dependent, it becometh us to be—

1. *Humble.* "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" &c. "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?" &c. (*c*)

2. *Prayerful.* Surely it behoves us to acknowledge our dependence, and seek support. "Give us this day our daily bread;" "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit;" "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation;"—such petitions are ever appropriate on the lips of dependent creatures.

III. A consecration of common things.

To the offerer of the basket of firstfruits all his goods were sacred; all were blessed to him (Deut. xxvi. 11; and comp. Ezek. xlv. 30; 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). Blessings are most enjoyed by us when we receive them with gratitude, and with practical acknowledgment of our obligation to God for them. The practical recognition of God's goodness to us in the mercies of every-day life, by heartily contributing to the cause of God amongst men, sanctifies all our mercies. So St. Paul affirms in the Epistle to the Romans (xi. 16), referring to this offering of the first dough, "If the firstfruit be holy, so also is the lump." After the cake of the first of their dough was offered unto the Lord the whole mass was consecrated to the use of man. (*d*)

IV. A provision for the maintenance of the ministry and of the worship of God.

This offering of the first of the dough, being an heave-offering, was the perquisite of the priests. Comp. chap. xviii. 24; Neh. x. 37. The meat offerings were designed by the Lord to be means of maintaining His service and His servants.

(For remarks and illustrations on this topic see pp. 84-86).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A gentleman of very considerable fortune, but a stranger to both personal and family religion, one evening took a solitary walk through part of his grounds. He happened to come near a mean hut, where a poor man lived with a numerous family, who earned their bread by daily labour. He heard a continued and pretty loud voice. Not knowing what it was, curiosity prompted him to listen. The man, who was piously disposed, happened to be at prayer with his family. So soon as he could distinguish the words, he heard him giving thanks, with great affection, to God, for the goodness of His providence, in giving them food to eat and raiment to put on, and in supplying them with what was necessary and comfortable in the present life. He was immediately struck with astonishment and confusion, and said to himself, "Does this poor man, who has nothing but the meanest fare, and that purchased by severe labour, give thanks to God for His goodness to himself and family; and I, who enjoy ease and honour, and everything that is pleasant and desirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgment to my Maker and Preserver!" It pleased God to make this providential occurrence the means of bringing him to a real and lasting sense of religion.—*The Sunday School Teachers' Treasury.*

(b) We stand to God in the relation of *dependents*. That is our actual position in life. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" Let a man begin his studies there, and he will become correspondingly reverent. Have you genius? *Who lighted the lamp?* Have you health? *Who gave you your constitution?* Do you find the earth productive? "Yes." *Who made it productive?* "I did. I till it, I supply all the elements of nourishment needful; I did." *Did you?* Can you make it rain? Can you make the sun shine? Come, I will set you a little task, mighty man, potentate! This: *Change the quarter of the wind!* Now, come, that is a very little thing for a great man like you. "Well," you say, "that is the sort of thing that I really cannot do." Then, *clear a fog off the hill.* You can do that. Look what a port you have, and what infinite impudence. Come, *clear a fog!* Where would your tilling, and your manuring, and your subsoiling, and your harrowing and rolling all be, and what would they come to, if God were to say to the wind, "Never leave the east;" if God were to say to the clouds, "Stand still;" if God were to say to the sun, "Don't shew thyself for a year"? All these things shew us that we are, notwithstanding our resources, which are undoubtedly numerous and great, *dependents*.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) How often have we aimed at building for ourselves tabernacles of remembrance and of rest, and we have gazed joyfully as it progressed to completion, and then the breath of the Lord has blown upon it, and it has been

scattered, and we have been turned adrift and shelterless; and, lo! dwellings already provided for us, of firmer materials and of more excellent beauty, upon which we bestowed no labour nor thought. And so it is with all the matters of human glory. The strong man rejoiceth in his strength, and magnifieth himself in the might of his arms, but the Lord hath made him strong; the wise man glorieth himself in his intellect, but the clear perception, and the brilliant fancy, and the fluent utterance, these are God's gifts; the rich man rejoiceth in his riches, but the prudence to plan, and the sagacity to foresee, and the industry to gather, these are the bestowments of God.

Ah! why will men sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag, when they have absolutely nothing which they have not received; and when every gift "cometh from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"? And in the realm of morals, and in the spiritual life, our feebleness is the same. A conscience void of offence, a good report of those that are without, a heavenly purpose or a holy resolve, the inner purification or the comely outgrowth of a beneficent life—we are poor to compass them. We acquire them only by our dependence upon God. Have you learned this lesson, this deep hard lesson of humility? Forty years' sins you have committed! have they humbled you in the presence of God? Forty years' chastenings have corrected you! have they humbled your pride or fretted you into greater audacity of rebellion? Forty years' mercies have blessed you! have they excited your gratitude or inflated your vanity? Brethren, we must be humbled if we would be happy. It was in the valley of Humiliation, you remember, that the lad that had the herb heart's-ease in his bosom kept his serene and his rejoicing home. —*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(d) Between the element of evil and the Christian elements there can be but one relation—that of war and struggle. They are antagonistic—the strength of the one is the weakness of the other. The evil must be wrestled with and overcome and exterminated, if it is to be well with the religious life. There is no such opposition between the Christian and the non-Christian elements of our existence. They become assimilated; the Christian absorbs the non-Christian elements of good. The ordinary duties of life—the every day virtues which form so large a portion of our being—have thus a Christian direction given them; they are elevated to a higher region than that which they naturally occupy. They become idealized; for just as the poetical spirit elevates and idealizes the most ordinary scenes, so does the religious spirit elevate and idealize the most ordinary ongoing of life. Religion is like poetry, an elevation and con-

secration of common things. You have seen a landscape which, while under the shadow, looked cold and bleak and forbidding, burst forth into life and beauty when the sun's rays fell upon it; so are the most ordinary affairs

—the weary plodding, the dreary sameness, the dull routine—of our daily existence irradiated with a Divine glory by the light which comes from God.—C. K. Watt, M.A.

SINS OF OMISSION AND IGNORANCE.

(Verses 22-29.)

This paragraph suggests the following observations:—

I. Omissions of duty are accounted sinful by God.

"If ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses," &c. We sin not only when we break the commandments of God, but also when we fail to keep any of them. How many are our sins of omission! We are conscious of very many. And how many are there which have eluded our observation, and are known only to God! "Sins of commission," says Bulwer Lytton, "may not, perhaps, shock the retrospect of conscience. Large and obtrusive to view, we have confessed, mourned, repented, possibly atoned them. Sins of omission, so veiled amidst our hourly emotions—blent, confused, unseen in the conventional routine of existence;—Alas! could these suddenly emerge from their shadow, group together in serried mass and accusing order, would not the best of us then start in dismay, and would not the proudest humble himself at the Throne of Mercy!" (a)

II. Omissions of duty, even when arising from ignorance, are accounted sinful by God.

"If ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation," &c. (verse 24). "And if any soul sin through ignorance," &c. (verse 27). So David prays, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." The reference is to unintentional sins; to sins not only unobserved by men, but not even known to the person himself at the time; unintentional sins of omission. (b) But let it be noticed in this connection, that—

1. *Ignorance of the Divine requirements is itself sinful in the case of most persons.* If a person can ascertain the will of God concerning him, he is bound to do so. That will is revealed to us in Nature and in the Bible: it is proclaimed and expounded regularly and freely and frequently by Christian teachers and preachers. We may know it if we will; we ought to know it. Spiritual ignorance is frequently not a misfortune, but a sin; not to be pitied, but to be condemned. (c)

2. *It is to be feared that in many cases where ignorance is urged as an excuse for sin, the real cause is indifference.* When men make no effort to know the will of God, and are but little concerned to do it, it is not ingenuous on their part to plead ignorance as an excuse for their sins.

III. A whole nation may be guilty of sins of omission and ignorance as well as an individual.

The legislation laid down in verses 22-26, is with a view to the whole nation being guilty of such sins. "This 'not doing all the commandments of Jehovah,' of which the congregation is supposed to incur the guilt without perceiving it, might consist either in the fact that, in particular instances, whether from oversight or negligence, the whole congregation omitted to fulfil the commandments of God, *i.e.* certain precepts of the law, *sc.* in the fact that they neglected the true and proper fulfilment of the whole law, either, as *Outram* supposes, 'by retaining to a certain extent the national rites, and following the worship of the true God, and yet at the same time acting unconsciously in opposition to the law, through having been led astray by some common errors;' or by allowing the

evil example of godless rulers to seduce them to neglect their religious duties, or to adopt and join in certain customs and usages of the heathen, which appeared to be reconcilable with the law of Jehovah, though they really led to contempt and neglect of the commandments of the Lord.”—*Keil and Del.* As illustrations of the sins here legislated, for Outram refers to the apostate kings, “when the people neglected their hereditary rites, and, forgetting the sacred laws, fell by a common sin into the observance of the religious rites of other nations.” This view is confirmed by the offerings which Hezekiah made as an atonement for the sins of his father’s reign (2 Chron. xxix. 21-36); and by the offerings made by the Israelites upon their return from their captivity (Ezra viii. 35).

It is, alas! not difficult to discover sins which may be truly called national even in our own enlightened country and age; but it would be difficult honestly to allege that they are sins of ignorance. Is not drunkenness a national sin? Are we as a nation guiltless in relation to the opium traffic? Are there not other sins of which this British nation is greatly guilty?

IV. Sins of omission and ignorance may be forgiven.

There is a sin for which there is no forgiveness; but sins of ignorance and omission may be forgiven upon certain conditions. Our Lord pleaded that His crucifiers might be forgiven because of their ignorance of the true character of their deed (Luke xxiii. 34). And St. Paul writes, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

1. *In every case sacrifice was a condition of forgiveness.* When the congregation or the individual became aware

of the sinfulness of their omissions, they were to offer a sin-offering as an acknowledgment of guilt and a condition of forgiveness. Whether the case were that of the whole congregation, or one member of the congregation; whether the individual were an Israelite, or a foreigner, sacrifice must be offered when the sin became known. The great truth here set forth is that the sinner needs atonement. Every sin tends to estrange the sinner from God. We are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which strikingly exhibits the heinousness of sin, God’s abhorrence of it also, and His infinite love for the sinner. (d). Our need of the merit of the Saviour’s sacrifice, and the aid of His intercession, is continual.

2. *The extent of the sacrifice required varied in different cases.* When the sin was national, “all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt-offering, for a sweet savour unto the Lord, with his meat-offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering;” but when the sin was personal, “then he shall bring a she-goat of the first year for a sin-offering.” The law of proportion is observed in the sacrifices which God demands. His requirements are ever “reasonable.” Comp. Rom. xii. 1.

Conclusion.

1. *Let us heartily loathe sin, whether of omission or commission* (Jer. xlv. 4).

2. *Let us faithfully examine ourselves in the light of God’s holy Word.* Let no sin hide itself from our view, if we can prevent it (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

3. *Let us earnestly seek forgiveness for all sins through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord* (Eph. i. 7; 1 John i. 9).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Omissions cannot be trivial, if we only reflect what an influence they would have upon an ordinary commonwealth, if they were perpetrated there as they are in God’s commonwealth. Think a minute, if one person has a right to omit his duty, another has, and all have. Then the watchman would omit to guard the house, the policeman would omit

to arrest the thief, the judge would omit to sentence the offender, the sheriff would omit to punish the culprit, the government would omit to carry out its laws; then every occupation would cease, and the world would die of stagnation; the merchant would omit to attend to his calling, the husbandman would omit to plough the land: where would

the commonwealth be? The kingdom would be out of joint; the machine would break down, for no cog of the wheels would act upon its fellow. How would societies of men exist at all? And surely if this is not to be tolerated in a society of men, much less in that great commonwealth of which God is the King, in which angels and glorified spirits are the peers, and all creatures citizens! How can the Lord tolerate that here there should be an omission, and there an omission, in defiance of His authority? As the Judge of all the earth, He must bring down His strong right hand upon these omissions, and crush out for ever the spirit that would thus revolt against His will.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) The perfection and spirituality of God's law render it almost impossible for a fallen son of Adam ever to know all the innumerable instances of his transgressing it. Add to which, that false principles and inveterate prejudices make us regard many things as innocent, and some things as laudable, which, in the eye of Heaven, are far otherwise. Self-examination is a duty which few practise as they ought to do: and he who practises it best will always have reason to conclude his particular confession with this general petition, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."—*George Horne.*

Many books have a few lines of *errata* at the end, but our *errata* might well be as large as the volume if we could but have sense enough to see them. Augustine wrote in his older days a series of *Retractions*; ours might make a library if we had enough grace to be convinced of our mistakes, and to confess them. If we had eyes like those of God we should think very differently of ourselves. The transgressions which we see and confess are but like the farmer's small samples which he brings to market, when he has left his granary full at home.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The things revealed belong to us and our children to do them; and to be ignorant of

any of these is a sin in the sight of God. We have the light of the truth shining in our faces, but we shut our eyes against it, lest it should shine in our hearts. We have the Word, we may read it, or hear it read, we have it preached, and other means of knowledge offered to us, therefore all such are left without excuse. It shall not excuse a subject when he hath broken some penal statute, to say, "Alas! I knew not the law, I was utterly ignorant of it, I never heard in all my life of any such matter." For the law is passed, printed, and published, and thou must take knowledge of it. Every man at his own peril must look to it, and if he run in danger of it, it is his own fault: so we may say of the law of God. He hath set it forth to the view of all, and all must make inquiry after it at their uttermost peril.—*Attersoll.*

(d) Sinners are saved not simply because so much pain and grief have been endured in their stead, but because Christ has performed a great spiritual work on their behalf, and has performed it in the full foresight of all the suffering that would be inseparable from His so doing. It is monstrous to suppose that the Deity could be pleased with mere suffering. It is the spiritual essence in the Atonement that makes it to be what it is to us. It may be accepted as certain, that in the gift of the Son of God we have the brightest manifestation of the love of the Father; and that in the willing humiliation and grief of the Redeemer we have the tenderest revelation of pity towards the evil and unthankful, and at the same time the noblest act of worship ever rendered to the good and the holy. In this sense, it is truly by the sorrows, the death, the cross of Christ that we have salvation. It has been His will to become thus acquainted with grief, and to die—to die the death of the cross—that we might be saved.—*Robert Vaughan, D.D.*

THE NATURE AND PUNISHMENT OF PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.

(*Verses 30, 31.*)

A very marked difference is recognised between sins of omission and ignorance and sins of presumption; the heinousness of the latter is much greater than of the former. "All unrighteousness is sin;" and all sin is essentially evil; but all sins are not alike evil; the evil of some sins is greater than the evil of others. Moreover the guilt of the same sin may differ greatly when committed by different persons under different circumstances and influences, and with different motives. Attersoll

says truly, "There is great difference in the manner of sinning; some sin ignorantly, some willingly (Psa. xix. 12, 13; 1 Tim. i. 13). Some are principal and ringleaders in the sin, others are only accessories; some are only in thought, others in deed; some offend of malice, some offend of weakness; some commit sin, others, besides this, have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. i. 32)." (a) We have now to consider the worst of sins. Notice:—

I. The nature of presumptuous sins.

"But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously," &c. The marginal rendering, which is correct, gives us an insight into the nature of these sins. "The soul that doeth with an high hand." To sin "with a high hand" is to sin in a daring spirit and defying manner. Comp. Job xv. 25. Presumptuous sins are here represented as involving—

1. *Positive breach of the law of God.* "He hath broken His commandment." Very great is the difference between sins of omission unwittingly committed, and sins of commission wilfully committed. The guilt of the latter is very dark.

2. *Contempt of the word of God.* "He hath despised the word of the Lord." He despised God's word of command by disregarding its authority; His word of promise by disregarding its encouragements to obedience; and His word of threatening by setting at nought its design and power to deter from sin.

3. *Blasphemy against God Himself.* "The same reproacheth" (revileth, or blasphemeth) "the Lord." "Yes, reproacheth Him: reproacheth His omniscience as if He did not know; reproacheth His holiness as if He did not care; reproacheth His truth as if, having spoken, yet He would not do it; reproacheth His power as if His arm were shortened, and He could not strike! Are we prepared for this cluster of impieties? 'Lord, keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins.'" (b)

II. The punishment of presumptuous sins.

1. *Death.* "That soul shall be cut off from among his people; . . . that soul shall utterly be cut off." We conclude that these words point to the punishment of death, and not simply

to exclusion from the political and religious privileges of the nation, because of—(1) The solemn force and emphasis of the words themselves; and (2) The illustration of the operation of the law given in the next paragraph (verses 32-36). Presumptuous sinners were put to death, in some instances by public execution, and in others by the immediate judgment of God. Persistence in sin leads to worse than bodily death. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (c)

2. *Confirmed sinfulness.* "His iniquity shall be upon him." The natural tendency of wilful and daring sin is to harden the heart in its rebellion against God beyond all hope of repentance. Comp. Heb. x. 26-29. (d)

Conclusion.

1. *As the guilt of sin differs so also does the punishment.* Comp. Matt. xi. 22-24; xxiii. 14; Luke xii. 47, 48; Heb. x. 28, 29.

2. *Let those who have already advanced far in sin turn from their evil ways ere it be too late.* You cannot remain stationary. You must either turn from sin to the Saviour, or go on in sin until you become a daring and defiant and hopeless rebel against God. Be warned in time.

3. *If we would keep clear of presumptuous sins let us guard against sins of every kind and degree.* "Cultivate a holy shrinking from sin in its most unobserved beginnings, and in its least degrees. Sensitiveness to the smallest degree of offending is the true and only security of the Christian. Sin shall never have dominion over him who resists the first putting on of its chains."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Two persons may commit the same identical crime, yet the guilt may be inconceivably greater in the one case than the other. The one may have had no instruction—no benefit from parental culture—no faithful warnings and admonitions—no holy example to direct and regulate—no warning to restrain—no encouragement to animate in the right path. The other may have been sur-

rounded by all the helps and inducements to right consideration—to holy fear—to correct conduct; and therefore his sin is marked with a far higher degree of aggravation than the other; and thus, in the sight of God, the judge on the bench often may be far more guilty than the criminal at the bar.—*Joseph Fletcher, D.D.*

(b) The final stage of presumptuous sinning

is reached when, to the clearest knowledge of the greatness of our sin, and to the most elaborate and carefully-contrived schemes for effecting it, there is added the resoluteness of obstinacy—a dogged and persevering stubbornness in getting our own way, even though, in addition to all the remonstrances of conscience and the Holy Spirit of God, all the aspects of God's Providence are against us—frowning us back every step we take. A striking illustration of this form of presumption we have in the history of Balaam. We see there a man intent on a scheme for his own aggrandisement. God opposed that scheme. The man keeps tampering with his conscience to get leave to do a wrong thing, till at last God in anger gives him leave. But no sooner does this bad man set out than the frown of God meets him. A mysterious power drives him back. His foot is crushed. His ass falls. Before his opened eyes stands the angel of God, telling him his way is a perverse way, and yet, after a few hollow professions of contrition, he determines to go on. So it is that the transgressor “holdeth fast his iniquity,” and will not let it go. He would break a lance even with an angel in the path of the vineyards. Oh! how often does God make it difficult for us to find opportunities for our besetting sin. The farther we go the more we find our way hedged up with thorns. The difficulties grow upon us like a waking nightmare. And yet with a madness that knows no control, and a hardihood that braves all consequences, we rush upon the thick bosses of the Almighty, and, in an attitude of defiant presumption, stretch out our hands against God.—*Daniel Moore, M.A.*

(c) The tale of the goblet which the genius of a heathen fashioned was true, and taught a

moral of which many a death-bed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup. Coiled for the spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath the ruby wine. Nor did he who raised the golden cup to quench his thirst, and quaff the delicious draught, suspect what lay below, till, as he reached the dregs, that dreadful head rose up, and glistened before his eyes. So, when life's cup is nearly emptied, and sin's last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs, shall rise the ghastly terrors of remorse and death and judgment upon the despairing soul. Be assured, a serpent lurks at the bottom of guilt's sweetest pleasure.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

(d) There is a gravitating power about sins of presumption from which the soul rarely ever rises. Every wilful sin hardens the heart and renders it less accessible to converting influences than it was before. One conquest over the conscience makes way for another, and that for a third, till at length this inward monitor becomes “seared as with a hot iron.” It has neither voice to speak, nor authority to restrain, nor sensibility to feel. Sceptreless, deaf, stifled, gagged, it dies and makes no sign. Thus evil men and wilful sinners wax worse and worse; because the habit of presumptuous sinning, of tampering with conscience, and resisting the Holy Ghost, forecloses against them all the means of their ever getting better. . . . From transgression to transgression, from lower depth to lower depth, neither heaven nor earth, neither angels nor men have it in charge to interfere: —“Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone.”—*Daniel Moore, M.A.*

SINS DANGEROUS AND SINS DEADLY.

(Verses 27 and 30.)

In the text God seeks to impress on all that no sin can be trifled with, because every sin must be atoned for, and then to warn that constant trifling with sin must harden the soul and place it beyond the limits of pardon. The text suggests two thoughts—

I. That there are degrees in sin.

The Lord distinguishes here between sins of ignorance, which might be atoned for, and sins of presumption, for which there could be no atonement. There are degrees in guilt. The same act of sin in two different persons, or in the same person at different times,

varies as to guilt. Take any sin—the mere deed is the same in the professing Christian and the man that has been brought up in ignorance and vice, but the degrees of guilt are very different. Guilt is not to be measured by the mere act of the sin; but by the mind that gives birth to it, by the circumstances under which it is done, by the results which follow, &c.

Sins of ignorance are those which are not intentional and deliberate; those resulting from human frailty and thoughtlessness, from lack of watchfulness or courage, &c.

Presumptuous sins are those committed "with a high hand," deliberately, daringly, against light and conviction and the known commands of God.

Between these two God made a distinction. He did not and could not deal with them alike. He weighs actions; He estimates conduct. His knowledge, wisdom and justice are such that He cannot err, and that no one shall be wronged. There are then degrees in sin; and it is of the utmost importance for all to know and realise this. It will act as a great check on sin. People sometimes say, as an excuse for their sin, that as they have gone wrong they might as well suffer for much as for little. No! it is false. With every sin the man gets worse; sinfulness increases. Sin grows; there is development in it. Every step in sin is a step into greater danger, and leaves less hope of reclamation. Sins of ignorance through trifling and neglect may grow to be those of presumption.

II. That while all sins are dangerous some are deadly.

The text shows that all sin is dangerous by the fact that an atonement had to be made for sins of ignorance; none could be forgiven without. In sinning we trifle with our best interests, and expose ourselves to the greatest danger. While ignorance may excuse, nothing can justify any sin. The text further tells us of sins for which the doer was cut off from among the people. These sins were murder, adultery, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, *et al.* For these there was no pardon. Why? Not because God was not merciful enough to forgive; but because the sinner knew these things to be wrong, and did them in defiance of God. The text gives the reason, "The same reproacheth the Lord," treats Him with contempt and scorn, and despises His law. And when man gets

into that state penitence is impossible, and that being so God will not and cannot forgive. The New Testament teaches the same. We find there that sin was so dangerous as to need the sacrifice of Christ, and it tells us of "a sin which is unto death," and of "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven unto men." We think that this is not any one sin so much as a state of mind that opposes God,—a malicious contempt and wilful rejection of the Gospel. For such the Bible tells us there is no hope; that the "day of grace has closed with them before the day of life." How is this? Not because God is not ready to pardon, or the sin too great to be forgiven. There is no sin beyond the merits of Christ's atonement. His blood "cleanseth from all sin." Why, then? The reason is in the man himself. God forgives only the penitent; it would be neither right nor safe to forgive without penitence. But this man is *impenitent*; he resists and hates God; he "reproacheth the Lord." To such a man pardon becomes impossible because penitence has become impossible. God leaves him! What a doom! Let hearers of the Gospel think of it. This doom is possible; and it is possible only in Christian lands, &c. Learn:—

1. *That God is merciful.* He sent His Son to die that He might put away sin, and restore us unto Himself.

2. *That there is a limit to His mercy.* What cost Him so much He will let no one despise. Let the sinning one take care. The door of mercy will be closed, and it may be against him.

Are you afraid that you have committed the "sin unto death"? The fear proves that, so far, you have not. If there is pain in the injured limb, it is certain that mortification has not set in; &c. Hasten to Christ at once, while there is hope. Out of Him man is ever in danger.—*David Lloyd.*

PRESUMPTION.

(Verse 30.)

We desire to warn you against *presumption*. The Psalmist prays to be cleansed from secret faults, and kept back from presumptuous sins. Our text and the context indicate the heinousness and fearful consequences of this kind of evil. Yet we fear that sins of this kind are awfully prevalent. Let us notice—

I. What presumption includes. It signifies—

1. *Boldness in evil.* Sinning without fear. Hardihood, daring, recklessness.

2. *Arrogance in evil.* Setting ourselves up against God. Pride of heart and spirit and tongue. Ps. lxxiii. 6; ix. 2; Acts ii. 18.

3. *Irreverence towards God.* All profanity. Blasphemies of the Divine name, &c. All cursing and defying God. As in the case of Pharaoh:—"Who is the Lord?" &c.

4. *Confidence of escape from the threatenings of God.* This is one of the chief elements of presumption. Not dreading nor caring for consequences, &c.

II. The chief causes of presumption.

1. *Spiritual ignorance.* Blindness of mind, &c. Ignorance of self and God. It is the offspring of darkness.

2. *Recklessness and inconsideration.*

Do not reflect. Do not consider the claims of God or man. The grandeur of Jehovah, and the guilty worm. The holy law, and man's criminality.

3. *Confirmed unbelief,* giving no credit to the Word. Its revelations, or threatenings, &c.

4. *Hardness of heart.* This is both a cause and a result. It makes men presumptuous. Presumption increases it.

III. The terrible results of presumptuousness.

1. *God, defied, will vindicate His authority.* He cannot let it pass. His majesty and law concerned, &c.

2. *Threatening despised, He will terribly execute.* Not one jot fail. There may be delay, waiting, longsuffering, but the execution of vengeance is certain.

3. *Mercy despised will involve in fearful retribution.* Hear God,—Prov. i. 24; Ps. ii. 4, &c. The instances of this, how numerous! The old world, Pharaoh, Sodom, &c., nations of Canaan, Jerusalem. (See Luke xix. 41-44).

Application.

1. *How needful is consideration.*

2. *Repentance, how imperative!*

3. *To seek mercy.* The Gospel publishes it in Christ, and offers it to every sinner.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER.

(Verses 32-36.)

This event is recorded here as an illustration of presumptuous sin and its punishment. Notice:—

I. The sin committed.

This man violated the law of the Sabbath (Exod. xx. 8-11) by gathering sticks on that day. Looking at the mere act it seems a very small sin indeed, and the punishment seems utterly disproportioned to the sin; but in estimating the moral quality of an action

much has to be taken into account in addition to the mere act. Thus in the present case, in order to form a correct judgment it is necessary to consider—

1. *The solemn urgency with which the violated command is enforced in the Sacred Scriptures.* See Exod. xvi. 22-30; xx. 8-11; xxxi. 13-17; xxxv. 1-3; Lev. xxiii. 3; xxvi. 2; Deut. v. 12-15. The first incontrovertible institution of the Sabbath amongst the Israelites is

recorded in Exod. xvi. 23-29. Shortly afterwards, at the giving of the Law, "it was re-enacted in the Fourth Commandment, which," as Mr. Garden points out, "gave it a rank above that of an ordinary law, making it one of the signs of the Covenant. As such it remained together with the Passover, the two forming the most solemn and distinctive features of Hebrew religious life. Its neglect or profanation ranked foremost among national sins; the renewed observance of it was sure to accompany national reformation." The importance attached to the keeping of the Sabbath in subsequent times appears from Isa. lviii. 13, 14; Jer. xvii. 21-27; Ezek. xx. 12-24; Neh. x. 31; xiii. 15-22.

2. *The relation of the violated command to the Lord God.* (1) The day was consecrated to God; it was dedicated to His honour; its violation, therefore, involved reproach to Him. "The holy Sabbath unto the Lord;" "the Sabbath of rest holy to the Lord;" "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;" thus the observance of the day is bound up with His honour. (2) The day was a memorial of their emancipation from Egypt; its violation, therefore, involved ingratitude to God, their Emancipator (Deut. v. 15). So that he who wilfully broke the Sabbath reproached the Lord.

3. *The beneficence of the violated command.* The beneficent character of the institution is unmistakably clear in the version of it given in Deut. v. 12-15. Its design and tendency are to promote human well-being, by securing to man a regularly recurring season of bodily rest and opportunity of spiritual culture. The day of rest has been well compared to "the green oasis, the little grassy meadow in the wilderness, where after the week-days' journey the pilgrim halts for refreshment and repose; where he rests beneath the shade of the lofty palm trees, and dips his vessel in the waters of the calm, clear stream, and recovers his strength to go forth again upon his pilgrimage in the

desert with renewed vigour and cheerfulness."

4. *The wilfulness of the violation of the command.* This man certainly knew the law; the manner in which the manna was bestowed was a regular reminder of it; he could not have been ignorant of the penalty of breaking the law (Exod. xxxi. 14, 15); yet he breaks it. He sins knowingly, wilfully, "with a high hand;" and in accordance with the law which he had broken, he is put to death for his sin. So we see that his sin was not a small or slight one, but one of great heinousness.

II. The punishment inflicted upon the sinner.

He was stoned to death. Three points deserve notice:—

1. *The case was dealt with in an orderly and becoming manner.* The man was taken in the very act of gathering sticks, he was then brought before Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation, i.e., "the college of elders, as the judicial authorities of the congregation" (Exod. xviii. 25, 26). Death had been assigned as the penalty of the transgression (Exod. xxxi. 14, 15; xxxv. 2); but it had not been determined by what mode the transgressor should be put to death; he was therefore kept in custody until the next day, in order that Moses might consult the Lord on that point. Comp. Lev. xxiv. 12. There was nothing rash or disorderly in the procedure in the case.

2. *The punishment was ordered by God.* "And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death;" &c. Both the penalty itself and the mode of inflicting it were declared by the Lord to Moses.

3. *The punishment was calculated to deter others from the sin.* This was probably the design in calling upon the people to stone him: "All the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him," &c. This would be likely to impress them deeply with the enormity of the sin and the severity of the punishment, and to awaken within them a wholesome fear of the offence.

Conclusion.

1. *Here is solemn warning to those who attend to moral duties, but neglect religion.* There are some who strive to obey the commands of the second table of the Law, but disregard those of the first. The violations of the commands of the first table are directly against God Himself, and they will not go unpunished. The man who neglects worship dwarfs and degrades his own soul, &c.

2. *The essential element in the law of the Sabbath is of perpetual obligation.* Several non-essentials have been altered, or have passed away; e.g., instead of observing the seventh, we observe the first day of the week; instead of reckoning the day from sunset to sunset, we reckon it from midnight to midnight;

and many things as to the mode of its observance have passed away. But the spirit and substance of the law is as binding now as ever it was. Worship for the soul and rest for the body are two of the deepest needs of man. The institution of the Sabbath is designed to meet these needs. "The Sabbath was made for man," and man cannot do without it. "Eternal as the constitution of the soul of man, is the necessity for the existence of a day of rest." The proportion also, one day in seven, is of perpetual obligation. "One day in ten, prescribed by revolutionary France, was actually pronounced by physiologists insufficient." No man can set at naught this ordinance of God without inflicting upon himself sore loss and injury.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Whatever Divine commands Moses gave the Israelites, he communicated to them their grounds. When he gave them the law of the Jewish Sabbath he gave them along with it its basis, that is, the revelation of God's Sabbath. At the time of the Israelitish captivity in Egypt we find not a trace of the Sabbath. It was a new thing when Moses gave it by God's command as a law unto the Israelites; and he made it the seal of a covenant which marked them out from other nations. On what did it rest? It rested upon something greater than mere human will, or even Divine will, and that something was an eternal necessity of man's nature, derived from a similar necessity in the nature of his Maker. And this is the only ground on which our obligation to keep the Sabbath day can rest. We cannot place it on the ground of the Mosaic law.

We have abrogated almost all that belonged to the Sabbath day. We have taken away "every manner of work." We have changed many other important particulars. From sunset to sunset we have altered to from midnight to midnight. And then instead of "the seventh day," we have left only this "one day in seven;" and the sceptical mind requires some proof of the moral obligation of keeping one day without work when we have admitted all the rest of the covenant to be ceremonial. We must take higher ground, and tell the doubter that there is an eternal necessity for the recurring Sabbath. It is just on this, only on this perpetual necessity of a Sabbath, that our observance of the Sabbath must be founded, in this requirement of physical rest by our nature, in the fact also that it is only by means of these stated returns of par-

ticular seasons that man can, in rest from temporal concerns, fix his attention on his Maker.

There is a further necessity for a similar outward form in the mode of worship on the Sabbath, which illustrates the primal necessity of having a day set apart. Thoughtful men have often asked why they cannot go out and have their worship in the great temple of the universe. The man who argues so knows not his own nature. There is a temple of God's universe, and those who deny it forget a grand spiritual truth; but the feeling gained in this temple of God is one thing, that gained in the church of God is another. We may in like manner worship God all the week, but the emotion of worship on the Sabbath when we lay aside work is different from the emotions felt towards God in the midst of work.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

Although I think that the whole law is done away with, so far as it is the law given on Mount Sinai, yet as far as it is the law of the Spirit I hold it to be all binding; and believing that our need of a Lord's-day is as great as ever it was, and that, therefore, its observance is God's will, and is likely as far as we can see, to be so to the end of time, I should think it mischievous to weaken the respect paid to it.—*Dr. Arnold.*

Religion has been the basis, the mother, the nurse of the English day of rest. It has sprung out of deep convictions of the sacredness of life, the holiness of law, the certainty of judgment, and the prospect of heaven. . . . The English Sunday will not be preserved without the continued operation of this religious principle. The love of money will be stronger than the love of rest. Competi-

tion can wage successful battles with anything short of conscience; God knows that it often avails to conquer this. But religious convictions are stronger, more widely spread, more deeply penetrating than any notion of conventional right, than any laws of a shallow expediency. If you try, if the nation tries, if a few noisy talkers try, to found the sanctity of the Sabbath on the advantage of recreation,—rational or irrational,—there will be very soon an end of its sacredness altogether. Let Sunday become the day on which ordinary travelling for recreation takes place,—and it will occupy tens of thousands of hands, who will find that day, as many do on the continent of Europe, the hardest and most laborious of the seven. Let recreation and amusement be the main reasons upon which you ask for the preservation of this day of rest, and you will have it invaded at every point. Let us be distinctly forewarned, that if the great use of a Sunday is a holiday; if we have no deeper reason than the relaxation of our physical energies; no other attraction than that which music, or fresh air, or public amusement may afford; if we are destroying the great safeguard of the day, we are running in danger of being robbed altogether of a sacred and invaluable right. To reduce our English Sunday to the level of a Continental or pleasure-taking Sunday, would be to de-

prive the people of England of their birthright, to hand labour, more than ever, into the power of capital, and to open the door along which all kinds of toil must, as in other countries, infallibly follow. . . .

In the name of your own rights, by reason of your own need, out of regard to the obvious necessities of the case, and in view of the experience of all Europe, beware how you trifle with the conscience, the religious spirit, the Christian consecration, the holy safeguards, of what, even in spite of yourselves, is blessing you.—*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*

Experience tells us, after a trial, that those Sundays are the happiest, the purest, the most rich in blessing, in which the spiritual part has been most attended to;—those in which the business letter was put aside till evening, and the profane literature not opened, and the ordinary occupations entirely suspended;—those in which as in the temple of Solomon, the sound of the earthly hammer has not been heard in the temple of the soul: for this is, in fact, the very distinction between the spirit of the Jewish Sabbath and the spirit of the Christian Lord's-day. The one is chiefly for the body—"Thou shalt do no manner of work." The other is principally for the soul—"I was in the spirit on the Lord's-day."—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

THE SABBATH-BREAKER AND HIS DOOM.

(Verses 32-36.)

Here is another arrangement for the exposition of this paragraph:—

I. The sin.

1. *The transgression of a moral law, which was enforced by the most solemn commands and by the severest penalty.*

2. *The transgression of this law willfully.*

II. The arrest.

The offender was seized in the act of transgression, and taken before the judicial authorities.

III. The consultation.

The direction of the Lord is sought as to the mode by which the sentence of death is to be executed upon him.

IV. The sentence.

This was determined by the Lord. The transgressor must be put to death

(Exod. xxxi. 14, 15); he must be put to death by stoning (ver. 35).

V. The execution.

"And all the congregation brought him without," &c. (ver. 36). The people were the executioners. This would increase the force of the warning which the event gave to the nation.

Conclusion.

1. *The moral element in the Law of the Sabbath is of perpetual obligation.* We still need rest for body and mind; we still need worship for the spirit.

2. *The neglecters of religious duties and privileges will do well to take warning.* If any man fails to observe religiously the Lord's day, he does so at his own loss and peril.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE FRINGES: GRACIOUS REMINDERS OF DIVINE COMMANDS.

(Verses 37, 41.)

In previous paragraphs we have had legislation concerning sins of ignorance and of presumption; in this paragraph we have an institution designed to prevent sins of ignorance—sins committed unwittingly—by keeping before the eyes of the people reminders of the commands of God, and of their duty in relation to them. The Israelites are commanded to wear fringes or tassels, &c. (*See Explanatory Notes* on ver. 38). This institution is not binding upon us, but it contains important instruction for us. Consider—

I. The proneness of man to forget "the commandments of the Lord."

This is clearly implied in this ordinance. The counteraction of this proneness is the design of the ordinance. This tendency to lose sight of the commands of God arises from—

1. *The sinfulness of human nature.* Unless we are renewed by the Spirit of God we naturally "wander after our own heart and our own eyes." The commandments of the Lord are opposed to many of the desires and purposes of the human heart; and we are not anxious to bear in mind that which clashes with our wishes, and rebukes us for much of our life and conduct. Men do not remember the commands of God *because they do not want to remember them.* Comp. Psal. lxxvii. 10, 11; Psal. cvi. 13; Rom. i. 28.

2. *The worldly spirit which so largely prevails in human society.* In the conduct of trade, as a rule we fear, men do not ask if their practices accord with the laws of God, but if they accord with the usages of trade or profession. In social relations to a very large extent men are not governed by the commands of God, but by the requirements of the society in which they move. The first and the supreme inquiry is not, Is this right? but, Is this expedient? or, popular? or, Will it pay?

In this way "the commandments of the Lord" are overlooked, or cast aside. "Our memories," says Trapp, "are like strainers, nets, grates, that let the pure water run away, but retain mud, trash, &c. It is with us as with those in Psal. cvi. 13, 'they soon forgot His works,' &c., and therefore we have need of all good helps."

II. The arrangements which God has made to remind man of His commandments.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes," &c. These fringes "were not appointed for the trimming and adorning of their clothes, but to 'stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance' (2 Pet. iii. 1), that they might look upon the fringe and remember the commandments. . . . If they were tempted to sin, the fringe would be a monitor to them not to break God's commandments; if a duty was forgotten to be done in its season, the fringe would remind them of it." Notice—

1. *The means which God employs to remind us of His commandments.* (1) The Bible. In this He not only reveals His will concerning us, but illustrates and enforces it in various ways so that we might not forget it. (2) The Holy Spirit. He influences our spirits; speaks in us by means of conscience, &c. (3) Holy examples. In these the will of God is "drawn out in living characters." (4) Warning examples of the evil consequences of overlooking His commands. These witness to us that it is perilous to forget the Divine will, and admonish us against doing so. (a)

2. *The design of God in reminding us of His commandments.* "That ye wander not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring; that ye may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God." Recollection of the will of God must be followed by obe-

dience to that will, or it will be worse than useless. The grand end of God's dealings with us is that we may be holy unto Him. He seeks to bind us to Himself in hearty loyalty. (b)

III. The grounds upon which God requires from us this recollection of, and obedience to His commands.

"I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God." Here are two reasons for His claims upon us:

1. *His personal relation to us.* He is the Lord our God. He alone is the rightful Sovereign of our being. He is our Creator, the Supremely Great, the Supremely Good, and His claim

upon our loyal obedience is incontrovertible.

2. *His gracious doings for us.* "I brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God." What has He not done for us? He has redeemed us from a captivity immeasurably worse than that of Israel in Egypt; and that at an immense cost (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). He sustains us in being, enriches our life with many blessings, and opens out to us the most inviting and inspiring prospects. We cannot overlook His claims upon us without base ingratitude.

Be it ours with diligence and prayerfulness to endeavour to do all God's commandments, and to be holy unto Him. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The gracious provisions of the Christian dispensation do not encourage, but discourage sinning. . . . We often sin through ignorance—the Christian dispensation enlightens us as to sin; shows us what God thinks of our transgressions; what God feels about them; what an evil and a bitter thing it is to sin against God. We sin through carelessness—the Christian dispensation makes us serious concerning sin. Who can look at the cross of Christ, and believe that He who is suspended on that cross is dying there on account of sin, and not be serious about sin? We sin through moral deadness—the Christian dispensation inspires us with life. It is a ministration by which the living God seeks to restore life to us. We sin on sometimes through despair—the Christian dispensation fills us with hope. Men say sometimes, when they have sunk very low, It is of no use trying to rise up out of this horrible pit, and to extricate myself from this miry clay. But, looking at redemption, we see that no man need ever sin through despair; on the contrary the Christian dispensation fills us with hope. We sin often through feverishness and through restlessness of spirit—the Christian dispensation imparts peace, restores quiet to our distracted nature, and keeps the heart and mind in that holy quiet. We sin through weakness—the Christian dispensation imparts power. We sin by the force of evil motives—the Christian dispensation changes our motives; so that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. The Christian dispensation does not encourage sin, but discourages it.—*Samuel Martin.*

(b) Throughout the Old Testament the holiness of God is made a sufficient, yea, the highest reason, why those who recognised this fact and this perfection of His nature

should be holy too. God had revealed His holiness to Israel; and He wished them to consider it the "beauty" of His nature. . . . We have the sublime, the supernatural spectacle of an obscure tribe of men, who recognised no other God than their "Holy One," who were distinguished from all other nations by being separated from sin, and who felt that nothing short of holiness befitted "the house of their God." "The High and Lofty One who inhabited eternity" bore in their creed a mighty name: it was no other than this, "Holy;" and no worship could be acceptable in His sight, no rites could lift the soul heavenwards, which were not holy. As their God was distinguished from all other gods by the dazzling holiness of His nature, so they were to be distinguished from all other people by their purity, their moral excellence, their resemblance to Him. The new relation in which they found that they were standing to the Holy God, the obligations under which He had placed them, the gratitude that He could claim from their hearts, the attraction of His love, the human cords, the loving hands by which He drew them to Himself, all insisted upon their holiness; and so we find it written in the Law of Moses, "I am the Lord your God; therefore shall ye sanctify yourselves;" and, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy;" "I am the Lord your God, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." And again, "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep My statutes and do them; I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." Again we find it written, "Ye shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine." Israel was taught to "Give

thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," to "Glory in His holy name, to exalt the Lord God, and worship at His holy hill," because "The Lord God was holy." The Psalmist and the prophets, like the pillars in the temple of their God, all palpitate with the light of His holiness, and are moved with the voice of the seraphs' song; they are dark with this excessive brightness, and by the holy service that they rendered shed on mankind the luminous principle, that the holiness of God is the chief reason for the holiness of man.—*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*

(c) Much of the beauty of holiness lies in little things. Microscopic holiness is the perfection of excellence: if a life will bear examination in each hour of it, it is pure indeed. Those who are not careful about their words, and even their thoughts, will soon grow careless concerning their more notable actions. Those who tolerate sin in what they think to

be little things, will soon indulge it in greater matters. To live by the day and to watch each step, is the true pilgrimage method. More lies in the careful noting of every single act than careless minds can well imagine. Be this then your prayer: "Lord, direct my morning thoughts, that the step out of my chamber into the world may be taken in Thy fear. At my table keep me in Thy presence; behind my counter, or in my field, or wherever else I may be, suffer me not to grieve Thy Spirit by any evil; and when I come to lie down at night, let the action (which seemeth so indifferent) of casting myself upon my pillow, be performed with a heart that loveth Thee; so that I shall be prepared to be with Thee, if wakeful during the night." This brief prayer, "Order my steps," teaches us attention to the minutiae of life; may we have grace to learn the lesson.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XVI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the history of the rebellion of Korah and his company. The time and place of this event are not recorded. It is probable that it occurred in one of the early years of their penal wanderings.

Verse 1. *Korah* was a Kohathite, and cousin to Moses and Aaron (Exod. vi. 16-21). *Dathan* and *Abiram* . . . and *On* were Reubenites; and were probably discontented because the rights of primogeniture were taken from their tribe, and the tribe of Judah placed before them. Moreover the camps of Reuben and of the Kohathites were pitched on the same side of the tabernacle (chaps. ii. 10, iii. 29); thus the two families were conveniently situated for conspiring together. *On* is not mentioned hereafter: he probably withdrew from the conspiracy, or took only a very subordinate part in it.

Took men. The word "men" is not in the original; and the verb "took" is in the singular number. But it is not uncommon in Hebrew when the verb begins the sentence (as it does here) for it to be in the singular, even when the nominative case which follows is plural. So Gesenius would translate, *And Korah . . . and Dathan*

and Abiram . . . took and rose up against Moses, &c. Keil and Del. follow Gesenius here. The Jerusalem Targum supplies "counsel" after "took." If this be adopted the translation will be, *And Korah . . . took counsel apart with Dathan and Abiram, &c.* The Hebrew literally translated is, "And Korah, son of Yizhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, took both Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben; and they rose up," &c. In this way Bp. Patrick, Drs. A. Clarke, Gill, and others construe the verse. It is suggested in the *Speaker's Comm.* that "probably the whole difficulty is due to an after insertion of the mention of Dathan and Abiram, and of their insurrection against Moses, into the original narrative of the sedition of Korah. This narrative would run naturally as follows: 'Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took of the children of Israel two hundred and fifty,' &c. In it, moreover, Korah and his company would be naturally represented as gathering themselves together against Aaron as well as against Moses (ver. 3). But in the expansion of this narrative with a view of making it comprise the

account of the proceedings of Dathan and Abiram, it became important to mark that the outcry of the latter was directed against Moses alone; hence the introduction of the opening words of ver. 2."

Verse 2. *Famous in the congregation.* Keil and Del.: "Called men of the congregation," i.e., members of the council of the nation which administered the affairs of the congregation (cf. i. 16)."

Men of renown. Keil and Del.: "Men of name" (see Gen. vi. 4). These two hundred and fifty men appear to have belonged to the other tribes; this is implied in chap. xxvii. 3."

Verse 3. *Ye take too much upon you.* Margin: "It is much for you." Dr. A. Clarke: "The original is simply רַב לָכֶם, 'too much for you.'"

Verse 4. Comp. chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 7. *Ye take too much upon you.* Moses gives back to them their own words, רַב לָכֶם.

Verse 9. *Seemeth it but a small thing unto you.* The words, "seemeth it but" are not in the original. Keil and Del. translate, "Is this too little for you?"

Verse 11. "The words of Moses in his wrath are broken. Literally the verse runs: 'Wherefore against the Lord (not against Aaron) thou and all thy company who are gathered together, and Aaron, what is he, that ye murmur against him?' Cf. the parallel reproof of Ananias by St. Peter (Acts v. 3, 4)."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. *A land that floweth with milk and honey.* Thus insolently they apply to Egypt the very words by which Moses had described the Promised Land.

Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Keil and Del.: "That thou wilt be always playing the lord over us?"

Verse 14. *Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men.* Margin as in Heb.: "bore out," or dig out; "i.e., 'blind them to the fact that you keep none of your promises,' equivalent to 'throw dust in their eyes.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *The glory of the Lord appeared, &c.* Comp. chap. xiv. 10.

Verse 24. *Tabernacle of Korah.* Heb.: כֹּשֶׁן, dwelling of Korah.

Verse 29. *Die the common death of all men.* Margin: "Die as every man dieth," i.e., a natural death.

Verse 30. *Make a new thing.* Margin: "Create a creature." בְּרִיאָה בָּרָא, create a creation; i.e., work an

extraordinary miracle: do such a thing as was never done before. So Dr. A. Clarke, Keil and Del. *et al.*

Verse 32. *And all the men that appertained unto Korah.* "Appertained," is not in the original; when that is omitted the A. V. is a literal translation of the Hebrew. This does not mean his children; for it is written, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not" (chap. xxvi. 11); and the celebrated Korahite choir were descendants of his. Keil and Del. say that, "all the men belonging to Korah, were his servants." The *Speaker's Comm.*: "All belonging to him who associated themselves with him in this rebellion."

It appears that Korah was not swallowed up with Dathan and Abiram. "Korah himself," says Bishop A. C. Hervey, "was doubtless with the 250 men who bare censers nearer the tabernacle (ver. 19), and perished with them by the 'fire from Jehovah' which accompanied the earthquake. It is nowhere said that he was one of those who 'went down quick into the pit' (comp. Ps. cvi. 17, 18), and it is indeed clearly implied by Num. xvi. 16-19, 35, 40, compared with xxvi. 9, 10." (See a somewhat full and carefully-compiled consideration of this question in Cobbin's *Evangelical Synopsis* on this verse.)

Verse 35. Comp. Lev. x. 1, 2.

Verse 37. *Out of the burning, i.e., from the midst of the men that were burned.*

Scatter thou the fire yonder, i.e., scatter

far away the burning coals in the censers.

They are hallowed. See the next ver. : "For they offered them before the Lord," &c., and comp. Lev. xxvii. 28.

Verse 38. *Sinners against their own souls*, or lives. Because of their sin their lives had been suddenly cut off. Comp. Prov. xx. 2 ; Hab. ii. 10.

Verse 45. *And they fell upon their faces.* Comp. vers. 4, 22 ; and chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 46. *A censor.* "Rather 'the censor ;' i.e., that of the High-priest which was used by him on the Great Day of Atonement ; cf. Lev. xvi. 12 ; Heb. ix. 4."—*Speaker's Comm.*

THE REBELLION OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY.

(Verses 1-7.)

"The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults ; but this was a regular conspiracy, headed by persons of consequence, abetted by many of the princes, and favoured by most of the congregation." In endeavouring to expound that portion of the narrative selected as our text, we take two main divisions.

I. The base rebellion of Korah and his company.

1. *The leaders of the rebellion.* "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took both Dathan," &c. Korah was a Levite, engaged in sacred services in connection with the temple and worship of the Lord, and ought therefore to have set an example of loyalty to the rightful rulers. He was also cousin to Moses and Aaron, and he ought to have found in that an additional reason for rendering to them prompt and zealous support. Yet he seems to have been the instigator and leader of the rebellion. Dathan and Abiram were leading men in the tribe of Reuben, who joined Korah in the insurrection. And with them were two hundred and fifty of the most distinguished and influential men of the nation. "A very dangerous conspiracy," says Trapp ; "for as in a beast the body follows the head, so in that *bellua multorum capitum*, the multitude. Great men are the looking-glasses of the country, according to which most men dress themselves ; their sins do as seldom go unattended as their persons ; height of place ever adds two wings to sin, ex-

ample and scandal, whereby it soars higher and flies much further." It is ill with a nation when its leaders are misleaders.

2. *The nature of the rebellion.* It was an organized effort to depose Moses from his position as the head of the civil life, and Aaron from his position as the head of the religious life of the nation. It was "against both magistracy and ministry." The rebels would have equal authority with Moses and Aaron ; they would either ascend to the same level as that occupied by the two great chiefs, or they would drag the two chiefs down to their level. In its essential features this rebellion has had many successors. (a)

3. *The cause of the rebellion.* (1) *The ostensible cause.* "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you," &c. They alleged that Moses and Aaron had usurped the position which they now held and the authority which they wielded. An outrageous assertion when we consider how often the Lord God had manifested His presence with Moses, and used him as the instrument of His power. They also alleged that, as the worshippers of the Lord God, all the congregation were holy, and had, therefore, the right to officiate as priests, and to exercise equal authority with Moses in the government. Their position will not bear examination. It is true that "the whole congregation of Israel were holy in a sense, as being

taken into covenant with God; but that which was a national privilege, shared by the meanest Israelite, gave no claim to the magistracy or the priesthood, which He had bestowed according to His pleasure." There is a sense in which all men are equal before God, yet to some He gives greater abilities and position and authority than to others. But let us mark here two things. First: The tendency of man to seek to justify himself in evil conduct. Korah and his company tried to make their case appear just and good. Men try to justify their evil conduct partly with a view of securing the co-operation, or avoiding the condemnation of others. They do it also in order to quiet their own consciences, by persuading themselves that their course of conduct is reasonable and righteous. But this attempt to justify evil is to add sin to sin. Second: The best of men in this world are liable to reproach and slander. Very few, if indeed any, abler and holier men than Moses have ever lived. And his credentials, as to his being called of God to his high position, were of the clearest and most convincing character; yet he is accused of being a domineering usurper, &c. Count it not a strange thing if you are reviled, &c. Comp. Matt. x. 25. (2) *The real cause.* Envy and ambition seem to have been the root of the rebellion. Korah was envious of Aaron and the priests, Dathan and Abiram envied the tribe of Judah its first rank amongst the tribes, and the two hundred and fifty princes envied Moses because of his place and power. (b) All these men were ambitious of higher rank and wider authority. "Pride, envy, ambition," says Babington, "was in their hearts, and that bred discontentment; discontentment, in-

surrection. If a man should call out all carpenters, none would come but such; but call for all that think themselves wise and able to govern, who will not come?" (c)

II. The noble conduct of Moses in the rebellion.

"And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face," &c. (vers. 4-7). Notice:

1. *His all-sufficient resource in trouble.* "When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." By prayer he endeavoured to compose his spirit, and sought help of God. The good man may ever seek and obtain direction and help from God by prayer. Comp. Heb. iv. 16; James i. 5.

2. *His sublime confidence in God.* This confidence is manifest in—(1) His bold proposal for settling the question raised by the rebels. "This do, Take ye censers, Korah, and all his company," &c. (vers. 6, 7). Moses must have been directed to this expedient in answer to prayer: he would not have ventured on so daring a measure without the sanction of God. (2) His assurance that God would vindicate both Aaron and himself. "He spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are His," &c. (ver. 6). Moses was convinced of the Divine authority of his own mission and the mission of Aaron, and that God would manifest to all in a manner not to be mistaken that He had chosen and called them to their respective offices.

3. *His calm rebuke of the rebels.* "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." The rebuke was *deserved*. They were leading a most wicked rebellion. The rebuke was *appropriate*. They were impugning the arrangements of the all-wise God: surely that was to take too much upon them.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Democracy, we are all well aware, what is called "self-government" of the multitude by the multitude, is in words the thing everywhere passionately clamoured for at present. Democracy makes rapid progress in these latter times, and ever more rapid, in a perilous

accelerative ratio; towards democracy, and that only, the progress of things is everywhere tending as to the final goal and winning-post. So think, so clamour the multitudes everywhere. And yet all men may see, whose sight is good for much, that in democracy can

lie no finality; that with the completest winning of democracy there is nothing yet won,—except emptiness, and the free chance to win! Democracy is, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of *zero*. When no government is wanted, save that of the parish constable, as in America with its boundless soil, every man being able to find work and recompense for himself, democracy may subsist; not elsewhere, except briefly, as a swift transition toward something other and farther. Democracy never yet, that we heard of, was able to accomplish much work, beyond that same cancelling of itself. Rome and Athens are themes for the schools; unexceptionable for that purpose. In Rome and Athens, as elsewhere, if we look practically, we shall find that it was not by loud voting and debating of many, but by wise insight and ordering of a few, that the work was done. So is it ever, so will it ever be. The French Convention was a Parliament elected “by the five points,” with ballot boxes, universal-suffrages, and what not, as perfectly as Parliament can hope to be in this world; and had indeed a pretty spell of work to do, and did it. The French Convention had to cease from being a free Parliament, and become more arbitrary than any Sultan Bajazet, before it could so much as subsist. It had to purge out its argumentative Girondins, elect its Supreme Committee of *Salut*, guillotine into silence and extinction all that gainsayed it, and rule and work literally by the sternest despotism ever seen in Europe, before it could rule at all. Napoleon was not President of a Republic; Cromwell tried hard to rule in that way, but found that he could not. These, “the armed soldiers of democracy,” had to chain democracy under their feet, and become despots over it, before they could work out the earnest obscure purpose of democracy itself! Democracy, take it where you will in our Europe, is found but as a regulated

method of rebellion and abrogation; it abrogates the old arrangement of things; and leaves, as we say, *Zero* and vacuity for the institution of a new arrangement. It is the consummation of No-government and *Laissez-faire*. It may be natural for our Europe at present; but cannot be the ultimatum of it. Not towards the impossibility, “self-government” of a multitude by a multitude; but towards some possibility, government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle. The blesseddest possibility; not misgovernment, not *Laissez-faire*, but veritable government.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

(b) For Illustrations on Envy see pp. 206-208.

(c) Ambition, that high and glorious passion which makes such havoc among the sons of men, arises from a proud desire of honour and distinction; and when the splendid trappings in which it is usually caparisoned are removed, will be found to consist of the mean materials of envy, pride, and covetousness. It is described by different authors as a gallant madness, a pleasant poison, a hidden plague, a secret poison, a caustic of the soul, the moth of holiness, the mother of hypocrisy, and, by crucifying and disquieting all it takes hold of, the cause of melancholy and madness.—*R. Burton*.

The same sun which gilds all nature, and exhilarates the whole creation, does not shine upon disappointed ambition. It is something that rays out of darkness, and inspires nothing but gloom and melancholy. Men in this deplorable state of mind find a comfort in spreading the contagion of their spleen. They find an advantage, too; for it is a general popular error to imagine the loudest complainers for the public to be most anxious for its welfare. If such persons can answer the ends of relief and profit to themselves, they are apt to be careless enough about either the means or the consequences.—*E. Burke*.

WICKED AMBITION FAITHFULLY REBUKED.

(Verses 8-11.)

Moses now addresses Korah and the other rebellious Levites, probably with a view to convince them of their error and sin before the case should come on for the Divine adjudication. For Moses knew that if their audacious claims were put to the test on the morrow “before the Lord,” as he had proposed, it would be at their dread peril, and that a similar fate to that of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1, 2; chap. iii. 4) would probably befall them. By this remonstrance he seeks to prevent this.

In this appeal Moses makes it clear to Korah that he detected the real motives which actuated him in this movement. The enquiries, “Seek ye the priesthood also?” and “What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?” would leave no doubt on the mind of the leader of the rebels that Moses was cognisant of his real feeling and aims. Notice:—

I. The greatness of the privileges conferred upon the Levites.

“Seemeth it but a small thing unto

you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation," &c. (vers. 9, 10). Matthew Henry's notes are so excellent in themselves and in their arrangement that we cannot do better than quote them. "He reminds them how great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites.

"1. *They were separated from the congregation of Israel*, distinguished from them, dignified above them; instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to have been thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes, though they had been in all respects upon the level with them. Note, It will help to keep us from envying those that are above us duly to consider how many there are below us. Instead of fretting that any are preferred before us in honour, power, estate, or interest, in gifts, graces, or usefulness, we have reason to bless God if we, who are less than the least, are not put among the very last. Many perhaps who deserve better are not preferred so well.

"2. *They were separated to very great and valuable honours.* (1) To draw near to God, nearer than the common Israelites, though they also were a people near unto Him: the nearer any are to God the greater is their honour. (2) To do the service of the tabernacle. It is honour enough to bear the vessels of the sanctuary, and to be employed in any part of the service of the tabernacle. God's service is not only perfect freedom, but high preferment. (3) To stand before the congregation to minister unto them. Note, Those are truly great that serve the public, and it is the honour of God's ministers to be the Church's ministers; nay, which adds to the dignity put upon them.

"3. *It was the God of Israel Himself that separated them.* It was His act and deed to put them into their place, and therefore they ought not to have been discontented; and He it was likewise that put Aaron into his place, and therefore they ought not to have envied him."

II. The unrighteousness of the ambition cherished by them.

Their ambition involved—

1. *The disparagement of their present privileges.* Their privileges "seemed but a small thing unto them." Great as they were, they did not satisfy them. "Ambition," says Trapp, "is restless and unsatisfiable; for, like the crocodile, it grows as long as it lives." And M. Henry: "Those who aspire after and usurp the honours forbidden them put a great contempt upon the honours allowed them." (a)

2. *Interference in the Divine arrangements.* "Seek ye the priesthood also?" It was by the express arrangement and command of God that Aaron and his sons were separated to the duties and emoluments of the priesthood; and, therefore, in seeking the priesthood for themselves, Korah and the Levites who were united with him were endeavouring to set aside the arrangements of the Lord God. Their insatiable ambition had dethroned their judgment, and, for a time, mastered their conscience; it was both unreasonable and unrighteous.

III. The heinousness of the rebellion in which they engaged.

Moses points out to them concerning their rebellion that—

1. *It was unreasonable.* "What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?" The high-priest was merely an instrument in the hand of the Lord. Aaron was not self-appointed. He was a servant called of God to his office, with his duties and his privileges clearly apportioned unto him. How unreasonable, then, was it to murmur at him for being high-priest!

2. *It was exceedingly sinful.* "Thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord." "Those resist the prince who resist those that are commissioned by him." Comp. Matt. x. 40; John xiii. 20; Acts ix. 4.

Conclusion.

1. *Let us crush every rising of ambition which is not in harmony with wisdom*

and righteousness. It is of such that Shakespeare says, and says wisely—

“Fling away ambition :

By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by’t ?” (b)

2. Let us seek to give to our ambition
a righteous and noble direction. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a curtain, but it is lifting, it is lifting, it is lifting; and when it is lifted, what do I see? The spirit world! ’Tis death that lifts the curtain; and when it is lifted, these present things will vanish, for they are but shadows. The world of eternity and reality will then be seen. I would summon a jury of the spirits that have passed that curtain; and they would not be long debating about the question whether Christ is worth the winning. I care not where you select them from—whether from among the condemned in hell, or from among the beatified in heaven. Let them sit—let even those who are in hell sit, and judge upon the matter, and, if they could for once speak honestly, they would tell you that it is a dreadful thing to despise Christ; now that they have come to see things in a true light—now that they are lost for ever—now that they are crushed with knowledge and feeling which have come too late to be profitable—now they wish that they had listened to the ministrations of truth, to the proclamations of the Gospel. Ah! if they could have a sane mind back again, they would shriek, “Oh! for one more Sabbath. Oh! to listen once more to an honest preacher, though his words might be clumsy and uncouth. Oh! to hear a voice once more say, ‘Come to Jesus while the day of mercy lasts.’ Oh! to be once more pressed to come to the marriage feast—once more bidden to look to Jesus and to live!” I tell you, sirs, some of you who make so light of Sundays, and think preaching is but a pastime, so that you come here to hear us as you would go to hear some fiddler on a week-night—I tell you, sirs, the lost in hell reckon these things at a very different rate, and so will you ere long, when another preacher, with skeleton fingers, shall talk to you upon your death-bed. Ah! then you will see that we were in earnest and you were the players, and you will comprehend that what we said to you demanded earnest, immediate attention, though, alas! you would not give it, and so played false to your own soul, and committed spiritual suicide, and went your way like a bullock to the slaughter, to be the murderers of your own spirits.—C. H. Spurgeon.

(b) How, like a mounting devil in the heart,
Rules the unrein’d ambition! Let it once

“The true ambition there alone resides,
Where justice vindicates, and wisdom guides;
Where inward dignity joins outward state,
Our purpose good as our achievement great;
Where public blessings public praise attend,
Where glory is our motive, not our end.
Wouldst thou be famed? Have those high
acts in view;
Brave men would act, though scandal would
ensue.”—E. Young.

But play the monarch, and its haughty
brow
Glow with a beauty that bewilders
thought
And unthrones peace for ever. Putting
on
The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns
The heart to ashes, and with not a spring
Left in the bosom for the spirit’s lip
We look upon our splendour and forget
The thirst for which we perish.

N. P. Willis.

(c) There are few men who are not ambitious of distinguishing themselves in the nation or country where they live, and of growing considerable with those with whom they converse. There is a kind of grandeur and respect which the meanest and most insignificant part of mankind endeavour to procure in the little circle of their friends and acquaintance. The poorest mechanic, nay, the man who lives upon common alms, gets him his set of admirers, and delights in that superiority which he enjoys over those who are in some respects beneath him. This ambition which is natural to the soul of man, might, methinks, receive a very happy turn; and, if it were rightly directed, contribute as much to a person’s advantage as it generally does to his uneasiness and disquiet.—J. Addison.

“Ambition is the vice of noble souls!”

If ’tis a vice, then let those souls beware,
Thrice noble though they be, and passing
fair

In the world’s eye, and high upon the scrolls,
Her favour’d minions where the world enrolls,
Lest it conduct to shame! Be thine the
care,

Soldier of Christ, that nobler strife to dare,
Which the rash spirit of the world controls,
And makes ambition virtue! Be it thine

To win thy bright unfading diadem
By works of love! Around his brows shall
shine

In heaven from glory’s source the purest
beam,

Whose aspect here, with beauty most divine,
Reflects the image of the GOOD SUPREME.

Bp. Mant.

THE SIN OF USURPING THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

(Verse 10.)

"Seek ye the priesthood also?"

The Papists say that Korah, Dathan and Abiram are like unto Protestants, and that as they perished for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron so Protestants for leaving "the Catholic Church," as they call it, will perish for ever in hell. But High Church clergy and writers of like kind compare Korah and his company to the Dissenters; they say that like as Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron, so Dissenters presuming to have preachers of their own establish a mock ministry different from that which has the apostolic commission. What a perverting of the truth! So far from it being true that Protestants or Dissenters are shadowed forth, it is not difficult to perceive rather that it shadows forth themselves. What was the crime of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? It was an attempt to put themselves in the place of Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron were mediators between God and Israel, and therefore types of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moses as lawgiver and Aaron as priest were types of Jesus; their office was sacred and peculiar to themselves; no man could, with God's permission, perform the duties of their office but themselves. No man on any consideration was to usurp the office of priest; no, not even Jesus Christ Himself, as you see in Heb. v. 4, 5. So sacred was the office of priest that not even Jesus Himself might take it until called to it by God Himself. This was the very crime of Korah and his company Now what is the conduct of the Papists and of High Church clergy? Is it more like the conduct of Korah and his company, or is that of Dissenters or Protestants more like it? Surely, it requires very little sense to see which are like unto Korah and his company. High Churchmen say that *they are priests*, that they offer sacrifices, that in the Supper of the Lord they

really do present the body of Christ to God, that they are sacrificing priests between God and the people; this is the great point which they maintain. Whereas there is known in the Bible but *one* priest, in that sense, in the present dispensation, namely Jesus, the great High Priest, who has gone to appear in the presence of God to present His sacrifice and offer His intercession. He carries the blood and presents the incense on behalf of His Church.

The wickedness of claiming to be a priest is seen more plainly when we consider the effect of it; it is absolutely to set Jesus Christ aside, and shut a man out from salvation. This illustration very plainly shows this. Notice, first, that the priest offered the blood of the sacrifice; and what was that blood offered for? It was God's chosen means whereby He would avert punishment and deliver from danger. If they had done wrong and provoked Him to punish them, or if they were brought in the providential dealings of God, into danger of enemies or other evil; if they shed the blood of the sacrifice and presented it before the mercy seat, or at the altar, it would be accepted, judgment averted, and evil removed. That was the *national* character of the Jewish religion; "without shedding of blood there was no remission;" and national mercies were given in consequence of their observing their national rites, and national evils were removed because of the offering of that blood. But, mark, the priest alone was to offer it; it would have been in vain if any other man had attempted to present the blood, God would not have accepted it, and the punishment would have been poured out. It was the priest who confessed the sins of the people and presented the sacrifice, and then mercy was vouchsafed. Now, what was done by the priest for Israel is what is now actually done by our High Priest for the Church. Observe how it is asserted that one was

typical of the other (Heb. x. 11, 12). Thus you see Christ is both priest and victim, as it is again in Heb. ix. 11, 12. How great then the office of Christ! . . . How awful the iniquity for any miserable man calling himself a priest to thrust Christ aside, and take upon himself the very work which here we read in God's holy Word Jesus is exalted to heaven to carry on!

Again observe, under the Old Testament law, the priest offered the incense also; it was not acceptable to God if offered by any other man. Christ's intercession was typified by the burning incense going up in a cloud of smoke together with the prayers and praises of the people; and no man might offer that except the priest. In like manner it is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who intercedes in the presence of God for His people (Rom. viii. 34). Hence we offer prayer "through Jesus Christ our Lord," "through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Just as under the old law no man might offer incense himself but must give it to the priest, so in this

dispensation no prayer is acceptable to God but by and through Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." How great then the wickedness of those who would presume to put themselves in the place of Christ, the great High Priest, and say that they are mediators through whom the prayers of the people are to be offered! What says the Holy Ghost again on this point of incense by the mouth of the beloved Apostle? 1 John ii. 1. . . . It may be well indeed that ministers should pray for their people, and people for their ministers; but it is *not* well that ministers should pretend to put themselves as mediators between God and the people, and represent themselves as successors of the Jewish High Priests; in a word, supplanting Jesus Christ Himself; this is not well.

Application.

Trust to the only Priest. Have confidence in that Man who because "He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood."—*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*

AUDACITY IN WICKEDNESS.

(Verses 12-15.)

Having finished his address to Korah and the Levites, Moses sent messengers to Dathan and Abiram, who during that address seems to have departed to their own tents, to call them to appear before him. With outrageous insolence they not only refused to obey his summons, but preferred the most unjust and impudent charges against him. *Their audacity in wickedness is manifest—*

I. In their defiance of the authority of the ruler appointed by God.

They absolutely and daringly refused to obey the summons of Moses. Twice they said, "We will not come up." "They denied his power," says Gill, "despised his authority, and would not obey his orders, and therefore refused to come up to the tabernacle, or to the tent of Moses, or to the Court of Judicature, wherever it was; perhaps the first is best." "Sturdy rebels," says

Trapp, "ripe for destruction." See Prov. xxix. 1.

II. In their reviling the ruler appointed by God.

They proceed to charge Moses with—

1. *Having injured them in their circumstances.* "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey? . . . Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards." The statement concerning Egypt was not truthful. Moreover, as Bp. Patrick observes, "nothing could be more insolent and ungrateful than to describe Egypt in the very same language in which God had often spoken of the Land of Promise." Their deliverance from Egypt, instead of being resented as an injury, should have been regarded by them as

a priceless blessing. And whose fault was it that they were not in possession of the Promised Land? They charge Moses with that for which they alone were to blame.

2. *Attempting to tyrannise over them.* "Thou make thyself altogether a prince over us." They speak as though Moses were in the habit of lording it over them as a usurping tyrant, when he was really devoting himself to their service.

3. *Endeavouring to deceive them.* "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?" They insinuate that Moses was trying to blind the congregation as to the true character of his doings and designs.

4. *Aiming at their destruction.* "Thou hast brought us . . . to kill us in the wilderness." Farther than this injustice and falsehood surely cannot go. If they were doomed to fall in the wilderness it was because of former rebellions of their own. As for Moses he had sought their good, and only their good. Is not the audacity of their wickedness terrible?

III. In the solemn appeal to God which their conduct called forth from the ruler which He had appointed.

"And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering," &c. Notice:

1. *His righteous anger.* "Moses was very wroth." Anger is not always sinful. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There are times when it would be a sin not to be angry. There is a deep principle of wrath in the Divine nature. Our Lord looked upon the wicked Pharisees "with anger" (Mark iii. 5). In proportion as we regard holiness with affection we must regard wickedness with indignation. There is much in this world at present to awaken wrath in godly souls. The anger of Moses was a righteous thing: it was the antagonism of his pure and noble soul against the base wickedness of Dathan and Abiram. (a)

2. *His truthful self-vindication.* "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." "Moses was not one of them," says Trapp, "that follow the administration of justice as a trade only, with an

unquenchable and unconscionable desire of gain. This is but robbery with authority, and justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, whereto while the sheep flies for defence in weather, he is sure to lose part of his fleece." Moses could truthfully appeal to the Lord that although he was their ruler he had taken no tribute whatever from them or oppressed them in any way or degree. Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 3.

3. *His solemn prayer.* "Moses said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering." Comp. Gen. iv. 4, 5. It may at first sight appear that in this request Moses manifests an unworthy spirit. But really "he craveth of God no more than to show and make manifest his own innocency and uprightness, which was to be decided by that offering."

Lessons.

1. *That man, having entered upon an evil course, unless arrested by some restraining force, proceeds to greater daring in and deeper depths of wickedness.* So Dathan and Abiram grew bold and insolent in sin. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," &c. Character is never stationary. It grows either towards perfection or towards perdition. In the case of the wicked their dread progress in wickedness is not difficult of explanation. (1) The heart becomes hardened; less susceptible to good influences; less amenable to conscience, &c. (b) (2) The propensity to evil increases in power. As the soul falls the momentum with which it falls increases. (3) The circumstances into which they bring themselves by sin urge them onward. One sin seems to make other sins necessary. Shakespeare clearly expresses the idea in *Macbeth*—

"I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er." (c)

Guard against entering on wicked, or even questionable, courses.

2. *The best of men are liable to the vilest misrepresentations.* There was not the shadow of reason for these

charges against Moses. He was the last man to play the lord over any people. "Those often fall under the heaviest censures who have merited the highest applause."

3. *The good man when suffering from misrepresentation can carry his cause to the Great Vindicator.* Moses appealed to God from the misrepresentations of Dathan and Abiram. So did Job from

the false charges of his "miserable comforters." So did David from the slanders of his enemies. Comp. Job xvi. 19; xxiii. 10-12. So may we when falsely accused. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth Thy righteousness as the light, and Thy judgment as the noon-day."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a great difference between the sin of one who is angry, and the cruelty of one who holds another in hatred. For even with our children are we angry; but who is ever found to hate his children? Among the very cattle, too, the cow, in a sort of weariness, will sometimes in anger drive away her suckling calf; but anon she embraces it with all the affection of a mother. She is in a way disgusted with it when she butts it; yet, when she misses it, she will seek after it. Nor do we discipline our children otherwise than with a degree of anger and indignation; yet we should not discipline them at all but in love to them.

So far, then, is every one who is angry from hating, that sometimes one would be rather convicted of hating if he were not angry; for suppose a child wishes to play in some river's stream, by whose force he would be like to perish. If you see this and patiently suffer it, this would be hating—your patient suffering him in his death. How far better is it to be angry and correct him, than by not being angry to suffer him to perish! Great is the difference, indeed, between one's exceeding due limits in some words through anger, which he afterwards wipes off by repenting of it, and the keeping an insidious purpose shut up in the heart.—*Augustine.*

There is an anger that is damnable: it is the anger of selfishness. There is an anger that is majestic as the frown of Jehovah's brow: it is the anger of truth and love. If man meets with injustice, it is not required that he shall not be roused to meet it; but if he is angry after he has had time to think upon it, that is sinful. The flame is not wrong, but the coals are.—*H. W. Beecher.*

High and gusty passions that sweep through the soul are sometimes like fierce summer storms that cleanse the air, and give the earth refreshment by strong winds and down-pelting rains. Men are better for knowing how to be angry, provided the sun does not go down on their wrath, and provided it is justified by the occasions of it.—*Ibid.*

(b) Wilful disobedience to God's commands tends most powerfully to harden the heart; for after we have once disobeyed, it becomes more easy to repeat the disobedience. But

this is not all. If you disobey, you must assign some excuse to justify your disobedience, or your conscience will reproach you, and render you uneasy; if no plausible excuse occurs, you will seek one; if none can readily be found, you will invent one. And when God proceeds to enforce His commands by frowns and threatenings, and to press you with motives and arguments, you must fortify your minds against their influence, and seek other arguments to assist you in doing it. This also tends most powerfully to harden the heart. A man who is frequently employed in seeking arguments and excuses to justify his neglect of religion, soon becomes expert in the work of self-justification. He is, if I may so express it, armed at all points against the truth; so that in a little time, nothing affects him, no arrow from the quiver of revelation can reach his conscience. Urge him to what duty you will, he has some plausible excuse in readiness to justify himself for neglecting to perform it. But if, as is sometimes the case, his excuses prove insufficient, and his understanding and conscience become convinced that he ought to hear God's voice to-day, he can avoid compliance only by taking refuge in an obstinate refusal, or by resolutely diverting his attention to some other object, till God's commands are forgotten, or by a vague kind of promise that he will become religious at some future period. Whichever of these methods he adopts, the present impression is effaced, and his heart is hardened. He has engaged in a warfare with his reason and conscience, and has gained a victory over them. He has resisted the force of truth, and thus rendered it more easy for him to resist it again. In a word, he has less religious sensibility; he has become more inaccessible to conviction, and less disposed to yield to it than before.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(c) It is somewhere fabled in ancient literature that a certain stag and horse were at variance; they battled for some time fiercely with each other. At length the strength of the horse failed him, and he sought the help of a man. The man complies, gets on his back, and chases the stag to death. So far the noble steed overcame the difficulty of his position, and gained his point; but the very

means he adopted placed him in a far worse position afterwards. With a bit in his mouth and saddle on his back, he continued to the end of his days the slave of the man whose assistance he obtained. It is thus with those who seek to overcome a difficulty or avoid a danger by recourse to immoral expedients. This, alas! is often done. In business a man contracts obligations. He finds that his credit, reputation, and position are in danger unless they are fully met. The hour comes

when those obligations heavily press upon him. He struggles honourably with them for a time. At length he gives way, and has recourse to forgeries, falsehoods, or some other wicked device. For the moment he seems to succeed; but the immorality he called in to serve him for the hour becomes his master and his tyrant, uses him as the man did the horse in the fable—as a wretched beast of burden, the victim of the bit, the saddle, and the spur.—*The Clerical Year Book.*

THE REBELLION MAINTAINED IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF GOD.

(Verses 16-22).

Consider:—

I. The test proposed by Moses to the rebels.

“And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord,” &c. (vers. 16, 17). Moses here repeats the challenge which he had previously made (vers. 5-7), with this addition, he states that Aaron also shall be there, and submit to the test. The test includes three clauses, or articles.

1. *That Korah and his company shall assemble at the tabernacle and burn incense.* This was a function reserved to the priesthood: they had claimed equality with the priesthood: thus let their claim be put to proof.

2. *That they should burn incense in sight of God.* All things transpire beneath His eye (Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13); but Moses gives special prominence to the fact that the trial of their claims was to take place “before the Lord.” In this renewal of the challenge he twice mentions this solemn fact (vers. 16, 17). Will they dare the awful experiment in His holy presence?

3. *That they should burn incense in the sight of God with a view to His interposition for the settlement of the question which they had raised.* This was the great object which they had in view in this business, and was clearly stated by Moses when he first proposed this method of testing their claims. Truly a very serious, and indeed awful proposal. How will the rebels treat it?

II. The test accepted by the rebels.

On the morrow “they took every man

his censer, and put fire in them,” &c. (vers. 18, 19). Notice:

1. *The awful presumption involved in their conduct.* It was but recently that they had witnessed Nadab and Abihu burnt to death by fire from the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, and yet they presume with unconsecrated hands and in a rebellious spirit to burn incense in the door of the tabernacle before the Lord. Terrible is their sinful hardihood! (a)

2. *The infatuation of Korah in sin.* He “gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” He seems entirely confident of success. Not a grain of prudence seems left to him. *Quos Deus vult perdere dementat prius.* “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

III. The interposition of the Lord God.

“And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake,” &c. (vers. 19-21). The interposition of the Lord was characterised by—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* “The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation.” (See notes on chap. xiv. 10, p. 248.)

2. *The declaration of His judgment.* He called upon Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation that He “may consume them in a moment.” By rallying to the tabernacle at the call of Korah the people had made common cause with the rebels

and become sharers in their guilt, and God threatens to destroy them instantly.

3. *His care for His faithful servants.* He "spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation," &c. Excellent are the notes of Trapp on this: "Good men are taken away from the evil to come. When God pulls away the pillars, what will become of the building? Lot was no sooner taken out of Sodom, but Sodom was taken out of the world." Comp. Gen. xix. 22-25. (b)

IV. The intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation.

"And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God," &c. (ver. 22).

1. *Its object.* The aim of the intercession of Moses and Aaron was to avert the threatened destruction of all the congregation.

2. *Its pleas.* These are—(1) The relationship of God to man. "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh." God is the creator and sustainer of human life. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "The Father

of spirits." Will He not then have mercy upon these misguided spirits, of which He was the author and preserver? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth," &c. (Psa. ciii. 13-18). "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands." Comp. Isa. lxiv. 8, 9. (c). (2) The justice of God. "Shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?" As compared with Korah, the author of the rebellion, the great multitude of the people were almost innocent. Would God sweep them all away in the same judgment? Comp. Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

Mark the magnanimity of Moses and Aaron in thus interceding for the people. The people were ever ready to join in any rebellion against their leaders, yet those leaders were ever ready to entreat God for them. "The good man," says a Hindoo epigram, "goes not upon enmity, but rewards with kindness the very being who injures him. So the sandal-wood while it is felling, imparts to the edge of the axe its aromatic savour."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a farther and a farther invasion upon the person encroached upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and with a running progress carries a venom and a contagion all over the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. If Cæsar comes once to pass the Rubicon, he will be sure to march farther on, even till he enters the very bowels of Rome, and breaks open the Capitol itself. He that wades so far as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes farther.—*Robert South, D.D.*

(b) "No doubt," said the Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, "I have met with trials as well as others, yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if He were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother and yet never missed them.'"—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

(c) The Creator is faithful. He abides by His creation, neither deserting, nor repudi-

ating it. Though nature has become a mad-house of fierce passions and deadly strife, His devotion to it knows no abatement. He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has put down all evil, and established righteousness, even "everlasting righteousness." "A faithful Creator" involves the idea of a tender Redeemer.—*John Pulsford.*

God never loses sight of any one thing He has created, and no created thing can continue either to be, or to act independently of Him. His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woful suffering, is now at ease, because He at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever-changing history. When I walk by the wayside, He is along with me. When I enter into

company, amid all my forgetfulness of Him, He never forgets me. In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of Him who never slumbers is upon me. I cannot fly from His presence. Go where I will, He tends me, and watches

me, and cares for me; and the same Being who is now at work in the remotest domains of nature and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings and of all my faculties.—*Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*

THE SPIRIT AND THE SOVEREIGN OF MAN.

(Verse 22.)

“The God of the spirits of all flesh.”

These words suggest three considerations.

I. The grand distinction of human nature.

The glory of human nature is not in anything physical, *e.g.*, the upright form, the steady and penetrating glance of the eye, &c.; but in the fact of its spirituality. Man is a spirit in a vesture of flesh. “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” (a). Concerning the human spirit consider—

1. *Its attributes.* (1) *Unity.* The body is composed of an indefinite number of separate and separable parts. But the spirit is one and indivisible. We are conscious of our individuality as thinking, feeling, acting beings. (2) *Voluntary activity.* Bodies have no power of spontaneous motion; being at rest, they will remain so for ever, unless acted upon by some power which is not inherent. But the spirit acts independently; man is gifted with volition, he chooses and rejects, &c. (3) *Thought.* The body does not think; after the death of the body the brain may remain perfect, but it does not reflect. But the spirit thinks, reflects, compares, judges. How wonderful is this power! and how great and glorious are its achievements! (4) *Sensation.* It is not the mere body which feels: when life has departed from it you may subject the body to any treatment whatsoever, but you will not discover in it any sign of sensation. But the spirit feels: it is capable of the deepest, intensest misery, and of the most exquisite and unspeakable joy.

(5) *Religiousness.* Bodies are incapable of admiration or veneration; but spirits have capabilities of worship and an instinct or instincts for worship. By his very nature man is a worshipper; his spirit wonders, admires, loves, adores. How great, then, are the capacities and faculties of the human spirit! Moreover the spirit acts *without weariness*. The bodily organs through which in our present state it acts are speedily tired, but the spirit seems untiring in its activities. And further, it appears to be *capable of indefinite growth and progress*. All the material forms of life with which we are acquainted advance and grow to a certain point, and then begin to decay. But the spirit seems to possess innate capabilities for never-ending growth. How wonderful and sacred are our spirits, possessing, as they do, such attributes as these!

2. *Its relationships.* It is related—

(1) *To angels.* With holy angels it has relations. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” These holy and heavenly spirits minister to human spirits upon earth. The human spirit has relations with evil angels also. We are one with them in the fact that we are rebellious spirits. These evil angels act malignantly on human spirits; they tempt them to sin; they seek their utter and irretrievable ruin. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,” &c. (Eph. vi. 12). “The prince of the power of

the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (2) *To God.* "God is a Spirit." "The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zech. xii. 1). He is "the Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9). "We are also His offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh." We were created in His image. His great redemptive purpose is to renew us into His image again. We may receive communications from Him; may commune with Him; may be "workers together with Him"; may participate in His joy, &c. We are called into this high fellowship through Jesus Christ. He restores the human spirit to those relations to God which sin had ruptured. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." How exalted and august are these relations of the human spirit to God!

3. *Its destiny.* At death the body "shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." From the body the spirit passes into the presence of God as the great Judge; and from His presence it passes to its own place of retribution, either to the Paradise of God or to the prison of the lost. (b)

Here, then, is the grand distinction of man that he is spirit with such wondrous faculties, &c. Amongst all God's works in this world he stands alone in this; for if we allow a spiritual principle to animals it is greatly and obviously inferior to the human spirit.

Man reverence thy spirit—reverence thyself!

II. The supreme Sovereign of human nature.

"The God of the spirits of all flesh." God's relations of Creator and Sustainer of man were most probably present to the mind of Moses in this appeal. We have already spoken of Him as the Creator of spirits. He is also their Sustainer. "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job xii. 10). "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25). His sovereignty over human spirits rests upon these re-

lations which He sustains to them, and it is manifest:—

1. *In the claims which He makes upon the human spirit.* He requires the sincere worship and the supreme affection of man: He claims the throne of our being. Comp. Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12; Ezek. xviii. 4; Luke x. 27.

2. *In the power which He exercises over the human spirit.* We have seen that He is its Creator; and its departure from this world is in His hands. He summons the spirit hence when He pleases. Comp. Job xiv. 5, 20; Eccles. viii. 8; Rev. i. 18.

III. The inspiring hope of human nature.

Because God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" Moses was encouraged to plead with Him that He would not destroy "all the congregation" because of the rebellion of Korah and his company. For the creatures whom He has created and whom He sustains He must have a kind regard. Towards the spirits of which He is the Father He must be gracious and merciful. "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job xiv. 15). Comp. Psa. ciii. 13-18; cxxviii. 8; Isa. lxiv. 8, 9.

From the relations which He sustains to our spirits we have a good hope that He will ever deal graciously with us. Comp. Lam. iii. 31-33.

Should we not leave the future destinies of men (about which so many minds are now much exercised) calmly and confidently to "the God of the spirits of all flesh"? It is absolutely certain that He will deal righteously and kindly with His creatures in this and in all things.

Conclusion.

Realise the greatness and dignity of your being. You are a spirit, created in the image of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and destined for immortality. The time comes on apace when you will realise the unspeakable importance of your spirit. Let your great concern be to secure its well-being. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) To say there is no such thing as matter would be a much less absurd inference, than to say there is no such thing as mind. The very act of inferring, as we do by reasoning, that the object which effects our senses exists apart from ourselves, is wholly incapable of giving us any knowledge of the object's existence, without, at the same time, giving us a knowledge of our own, that is, of the mind's existence. An external necessarily implies an internal. That there may be anything beyond or without, there must necessarily be something beyond or without which it is said to exist. That there may be a body which we feel abiding separate from us, namely our own body, one part of which gives us sensations through another part, there must be a *WE*, an *US*, that is, a *MIND*. If we have a right to call spirit, or soul, or mind, a mere negation of the qualities of matter; surely this might just as well be retorted by saying that matter is only a negation of the qualities of mind. But in truth the materialists cannot stir one step without the aid of that mind whose existence they deny. . . . The truth is that we believe in the existence of matter because we cannot help it. The inferences of our reason from our sensations impel us to this conclusion; and the steps are few and short by which we reach it. But the steps are fewer and shorter, and of the self-same nature, which lead us to believe in the existence of mind; for of that we have the evidence within ourselves, and wholly independent of our senses. Nor can we ever draw the inference, in any one instance, of the existence of matter, without, at the same time, exhibiting a proof of the existence of mind; for we are, by the supposition, reasoning, inferring, drawing a conclusion, forming a belief: therefore, there exists somebody, something, to reason, to infer, to conclude, to believe; that is, *WE*, not any fraction of matter, but a reasoning, inferring, believing being; in other words, a *MIND*. If scepticism can have any place in our system, assuredly it relates to the existence of matter, far more than of mind.—*Lord Brougham*.

(b) Nothing is more difficult than to realise that every man has a distinct soul—that every one of all the millions who live or have lived, is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. To explain what I mean. . . . When we read history, we meet with accounts of great slaughters and massacres, great pestilences, famines, conflagrations, and so on; and we are accustomed to regard collections of people as single individuals. We cannot understand that a multitude is a collection of immortal souls. I say immortal souls. Each of those multitudes not only *had*, while he was upon earth, but has a soul, which did in its own time but return to God who gave it, and not perish, and which now lives unto Him. All those millions upon millions of human beings

who ever trod the earth, and saw the sun successively, are at this moment in existence all together. Every one of those souls still lives. They had their separate thoughts and feelings when on earth; they have them now. They had their likings and pursuits, they gained what they thought good, and enjoyed it; and they still somewhere or other live, and what they then did in the flesh surely has its influence upon their present destiny. They live, reserved for a day which is to come; when all nations shall stand before God. . . . All the names we see written on monuments in churches or churchyards; all the writers whose names and works we see in our libraries; all the workmen who raised the great buildings far and near, which are the wonder of the world, they are all in God's remembrance—they all live.

Moreover, every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth, is in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another that one is the subject of God's favour, and the other under His wrath; the one in the way to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and is true of the living also. All are tending one way or the other; there is no middle or neutral state for any one, though as far as the sight of the external world goes, all men seem to be in a middle state common to one and all. Yet, much as men look the same, and impossible as it is for us to say where each man stands in God's sight, there are two, and but two, classes of men, and these have characters and destinies as far apart in their tendencies as light and darkness. This is the case even of those who are in the body, and it is much more true of those who have passed into the unseen state.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(c) Endeavour then, my brethren, to realize that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavour to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge them as He judges. Pass a very few years, and you will actually experience what as yet you are called on to believe. There will be no need of the effort of mind to which I invite you. When you have passed into the unseen state, there will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world, when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God, and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the Judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left? How poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the infinite aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable! O, my brethren! let the thought be upon you day by day, especially when you are

tempted to sin. Avoid sin as a serpent; it looks and promises well; it bites afterwards. It is dreadful in memory, dreadful even on earth; but in that awful period, when the fever of life is over, and you are waiting in silence for the Judgment, with nothing to distract your thoughts, who can say how dreadful may be the memory of sins done in the body? Then the very apprehension of their punishment, when Christ shall suddenly visit, will doubtless outweigh a thousandfold their gratification, such as it was, which you

felt in committing them; and if so, what will be the proportion between it and that punishment, if, after all, it be actually inflicted? Let us lay to heart our Saviour's own most merciful words. "Be not afraid," He says, "of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."—*Ibid.*

THE PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT.

(Verses 23-30.)

In this section of the narrative we have the final steps before the infliction of punishment upon the rebels.

I. The complete separation of the people from the rebels.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," &c. (vers. 23-27). In these instructions we have—

1. *A manifestation of the justice of God.* In his intercession Moses had pleaded the justice of God; and this is the Divine answer to his prayer. God will not consume all the congregation because of the sin of a portion of that congregation. "All His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." "The just Lord will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not." (a)

2. *An illustration of the peril of evil associations.* The people that were in the immediate neighbourhood of the rebels were in danger of sharing their dread fate. "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men," &c. (ver. 26). Lot's residence in Sodom well nigh ruined him. Jehoshaphat's partnership with the wicked Ahaziah ended in disaster (2 Chron. xx. 35-37). "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." (b)

3. *An illustration of the necessity of human effort in the attainment of salvation.* If the people would avoid the doom of Dathan and Abiram they must

hasten away from the tents of those wicked men. Lot had to make a speedy departure from Sodom. If the sinner would be saved from the punishment and power of sin, he must "flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him." (c)

The people obeyed the word of the Lord spoken by Moses: "They gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side." The instinct of self-preservation would urge them to swift compliance with the Divine instructions. Thus the rebels and their families were separated from the rest of the people.

II. The final statement concerning the decision of the question which the rebels had raised.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me," &c. (vers. 28-30). It has been well said by Dr. Kitto: "From the beginning of the world unto this day, no man ever made so bold and noble an assertion of Divine approval, or subjected his claims in the presence of a nation to a test so immediate and so infallible." And Matthew Henry: "The judgment itself would have been proof enough of God's displeasure against the rebels, and would have given all men to 'understand that they had provoked the Lord'; but when it was thus solemnly foretold and appealed to by Moses beforehand, when there was not the least previous indication of it from without, the convincing evidence of it was much the stronger, and it was put

beyond dispute that he was not only a servant but a favourite of Heaven, who was so intimately acquainted with the Divine counsels, and could obtain such extraordinary appearances of the Divine power in his vindication." How extraordinary and sublime was the confidence of Moses in all this! Calmly he makes this remarkably bold declaration, and leaves the issue in the hands of the Lord God. He knew well that he was not seeking his own in any respect; that his great aim was to promote the glory of God in the service to which He had appointed him; and, therefore, he could confidently leave the issue with his great Lord.

III. The final opportunity afforded to the rebels of turning from their evil course.

The warning which was given to the people to separate themselves from the tents of the rebels, and the final statement of Moses as to the settlement of the question in dispute, afforded the rebels another opportunity of desisting from their re-

bellion, acknowledging the authority of their rightful leaders, &c. The Lord is slow to anger. He affords to the greatest sinners many opportunities of turning from their sin, before He smites them in wrath. The Divine mercy in this case is the more conspicuous, inasmuch as Dathan and Abiram having refused to go to Moses and the elders, Moses and the elders go to them. Dathan and Abiram may yet be saved if they will. How great is the long-suffering of God! (d)

IV. The persistent and terrible audacity of the rebels.

"Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." "As outfacing Moses," says Trapp, "and scorning the judgment threatened. Hardened sinners make no more of God's dreadful threatenings than Behemoth doth of iron weapons, which he esteemeth as straws." "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here we open the Bible, in which we find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which enjoyed a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. The heathen are a law unto themselves. Five talents are expected to produce more than two. The Divine plan of judgment, therefore, is not arbitrary, but moral. If we lose hold of this principle, we shall see confusion where we might see the order of righteousness. First of all, and last of all, it must be our settled and unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or He is no longer God. Everything must perish which opposes this law. We are not, however, to look at incomplete cases, and regard them as final criteria by which to test the wisdom and righteousness of the Almighty. In many cases we shall have to repress our impatience, and calmly to wait until fuller light is granted.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) Be cautious with whom you associate, and never give your company or your confidence to persons of whose good principles you are not certain. No person that is an enemy to God can be a friend to man. He that has already proved himself ungrateful to the Author of every blessing, will not scruple, when

it will serve his turn, to shake off a fellow-worm like himself. He may render you instrumental to his own purposes, but he will never benefit you. A bad man is a curse to others; as he is secretly, notwithstanding all his boasting and affected gaiety, a burden to himself. Shun him as you would a serpent in your path. Be not seduced by his rank, his wealth, his wit, or his influence. Think of him as already in the grave; think of him as standing before the everlasting God in judgment. This awful reality will instantly strip off all that is now so imposing, and present him in his true light, the object rather of your compassion and of your prayers than of your wonder and imitation.—*Bp. Coleridge.*

(c) If a man knew that the ship in which he and his family were sailing, and which contained all his property, was leaking day and night, do you suppose he would be careless about it? Would he not be constantly baling out the water lest it should sink the vessel with its precious freight? If a man understood that a spark from the flue of the furnace had set fire to the timber of his dwelling, and that, smothered, it was creeping along and charring the wainscoting and partition, do you suppose he would content himself merely with saying, "I have no doubt that this house is on fire, and that it is dangerous?" Would

he not *do* something? Many men read the Bible, and say, "My dear children, we are all sinful; we are sold in sin; may God lead us out of our sinfulness, and draw us toward Him!" and yet put forth no effort to reform their lives. Meanwhile their sinfulness increases, and envelops them and consumes them. Thousands and thousands of men have died in that way, and been utterly destroyed. If a man is wise, no sooner does he have the slightest intimation that there is fire threatening the destruction of his house and all that are in it, than he calls for men, and sets them to work to put an end to the mischief. And when a man is touched by the Spirit of God, and he is made conscious that the fires of hell are in him, with what earnestness does he enter upon a course of repentance! How does he say, "God have mercy on me. Help me; teach me; lead me!"—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) He doth often give warning of judgments, that He might not pour out His wrath. He summons them to a surrender of themselves, and a return from their rebellion, that they might not feel the force of His arms. He offers peace before He shakes off the dust of His feet, that His despised peace might not return in vain to Him to solicit a revenge from His anger. He hath a right to punish the first commission of a crime, but He warns

men of what they have deserved, of what His justice moves Him to inflict, that by having recourse to His mercy He might not exercise the rights of His justice. God threatens Nineveh, by the prophet, with destruction, that Nineveh's repentance might make void the prophecy. He fights with men by the sword of His mouth, that He might not pierce them by the sword of His wrath. He threatens, that men might prevent the execution of His threatening; He terrifies, that He might not destroy, but that men by humiliation might lie prostrate before Him, and move the bowels of His mercy to a louder sound than the voice of His anger. He takes time to whet His sword, that men may turn themselves from the edge of it. He roars like a lion, that men, by hearing His voice, may shelter themselves from being torn by His wrath. There is patience in the sharpest threatening, that we may avoid the scourge. Who can charge God with an eagerness to revenge, that sends so many heralds and so often before He strikes, that He might be prevented from striking? His threatenings have not so much of a black flag as of an olive branch. He lifts up His hand before He strikes that men might see it and avert the stroke (*Isa. xxvi. 11*).—*Charnock.*

THE DUTY OF SEPARATION FROM THE WICKED.

(*Verse 26.*)

The statement of this duty needs to be very guarded.

This duty is different from the self-righteousness of the Pharisee described by our Lord in Luke xviii. 11, 12. *Comp. Isa. lxx. 5.*

This duty is not binding as regards the legitimate transactions of business with wicked men. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

This duty does not preclude association with the wicked with a view to their spiritual good. As followers of Jesus Christ it is our duty to endeavour to turn the wicked from his wickedness.

But it is our duty to avoid all voluntary and friendly association with the openly and defiantly wicked, all such association as may appear to countenance their wickedness. The testimony of the Sacred Scriptures on

this question is unmistakable. See *Psa. i. 1; Prov. i. 10-16; iv. 14, 15; ix. 6; Acts ii. 40; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; Rev. xviii. 4.*

Moreover, our text insists on the *thoroughness* of this separation. "Touch nothing of theirs." We must separate ourselves from their (1) society; (2) friendship; (3) pursuits; (4) customs, &c. In enforcement of this duty consider, that *by friendly association with such wicked persons—*

I. We countenance them in their sins.

It is the duty of every man to discourage evil; to wage determined and incessant warfare against wickedness; to agree to no truce with the devil. If we would discourage wickedness, we must separate ourselves from notorious evil-doers; we must not allow them any reason to suppose that we countenance even by silence to their sins. *Comp. 1 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 14.* (a)

II. We are in peril of being drawn into their sins.

The contagion of their example may take hold upon us. Friendly association with the wicked is full of danger to our own spiritual health. Comp. Isa. lii. 11. Such association also makes us partakers of their sins. Comp. 2 John 10, 11. (b)

III. We are in peril of the judg-

ment which will fall upon them for their sins.

This was the peril of the congregation about the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They must speedily get away from those tents "lest they be consumed." This was the peril of Lot in Sodom. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Comp. Jer. li. 6, 45; Rev. xviii. 4.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every person is most sacredly bound, in times of prevailing degeneracy, to act an open, firm, and decided part in favour of virtue and religion; and resolutely endeavour, by his example, to discountenance vice and impiety in every shape. In an especial manner should he avoid the very appearance of those evils which are most prevalent around him, and practice with double care and diligence those virtues which are most generally neglected and despised. It has been justly remarked, that when God confers on us the power to do good and repress evil, He lays us under an obligation to exert that power. Agreeably, the Apostle informs us, that to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Hence it follows that we are accountable for all the good which we might, but have not done; and for all the evil which we might, but have not prevented. By conniving at the sins of others, therefore, we make them our own. If the name of God be profaned, if His holy day be dishonoured, if a fellow-creature by intemperance render his family wretched, spread a snare in the path of his children, destroy his health, and finally plunge himself into eternal ruin, when we, by proper exertions, might have prevented it, a righteous God will not hold us guiltless, nor will rivers of tears, shed in secret over these sins, wash out the guilt thus contracted.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(b) There is but one resource for innocence among men or women, and that is, an embargo upon all commerce of bad men. Bar the window! bolt the door! nor answer their strain,

if they charm never so wisely! In no other way can you be safe. So well am I assured of the power of bad men to seduce the erring purity of man, that I pronounce it next to impossible for man or woman to escape, *if they permit bad men to approach and dally with them.*—*H. W. Beecher.*

Let no young man or woman go into a social circle where the influences are vicious or hostile to the Christian religion. You will begin by reproving their faults, and end by copying them. Sin is contagious. You go among those who are profane, and you will become profane. You go among those who use impure language, and you will use impure language. Go among those who are given to strong drink, and you will inevitably become an inebriate. There is no exception to the rule. A man is no better than the company he continually keeps. It is always best to keep ourselves under Christian influences. It is not possible, if you mingle in associations positively Christian, not to be made better men or women. The Christian people with whom you associate may not be always talking their religion, but there is something in the moral atmosphere that will be life to your soul. You choose out for your most intimate associates eight or ten Christian people. You mingle in that association; you take their counsel; you are guided by their example, and you live a useful life, and die a happy death, and go to a blessed eternity. There is no possibility of mistaking it; there is not an exception in all the universe or ages—not one.—*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*

CHRIST'S DEATH A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

(Verse 29.)

We wish simply to take the fact that an uncommon death, a "visitation, which is not after the visitation of all men," was made a sign or evidence of the Divine mission of Moses. We wish to see whether a precisely similar sign or evidence may not be urged for the

Divine mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We mean to assert that our blessed Saviour did not "die the common death of all men;" and from and by this very circumstance we strengthen our belief in His having been the Son of God; yea, God

as well as man. We wish you to well examine whether there were not powerful indications in the mode in which our Lord and Saviour submitted to His last sufferings, that He did not die as an individual man, but as a sacrifice for the sins of this creation.

Three out of the four Evangelists make express mention of Christ's crying with a loud voice, immediately before He gave up the ghost. And this loud cry preceding almost instantaneously His decease, produced in the centurion who stood by, the persuasion that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (Mark xv. 39). Now let us see what it was which thus wrought on the centurion. There was before him a Being nailed to a cross, dying in a manner as lingering as it was painful. The thing to be expected was that the victim would gradually sink, growing weaker and weaker, until exhausted nature gave way and the soul escaped from the body. Since this mode of executing malefactors was ordinarily so tedious that the legs of the sufferers were broken in order to hasten their dissolution, we must conclude that no crucified person would have naturally died, unless through the slow process of exhaustion, life having ebbed away as though drop by drop, till there was nothing more for the torture to exact. It was therefore quite unnatural that our Lord should have had strength to utter a loud cry at the very moment of the separation of the soul from the body. He showed that there was nothing like an exhaustion of nature; and yet the mode of death was such, that it was only through exhaustion of nature that dissolution could take place. Indeed, we have additional testimony that Christ's dying as He did might justly be called unnatural, for He died long before those who were crucified with Him—in a time so unusually short, that when Joseph of Arimathea applied for leave to take the body, Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and would not believe it till he had called the centurion and obtained certain information. Our Lord, though

crucified, did not die in strict truth through the effects of crucifixion: He did not die, as the thieves did, through any necessity of nature, or because His enemies had been able to reach the citadel of life. And it was the manifest voluntariness of the death of Christ which overcame the centurion. He could not but perceive that, through some mysterious ordinance or prerogative, our Lord had His life entirely in His own keeping; so that in place of being subjected to death, He seemed to have literally the lordship over life. Comp. John x. 17, 18. It may sound like a paradox, but it is nevertheless a truth, that death had no power over Christ even when He died. He breathed His last only because choosing to suspend that animation, of which, as Himself alone the author, Himself alone could be the destroyer. And if, then, Christ did not "die the common death of all men," who can wonder that the centurion was confounded at the spectacle, or that he broke into an exclamation which showed that he felt the Sufferer was something more than a mere man? "Of a truth this Man was the Son of God."

But now let us take a wider survey, and accompany our Redeemer through the scenes of His agony. We have on other occasions pointed out to you the striking and almost inexplicable contrast between the deportment of Christ, and that of numbers of His followers, as the hour drew nigh of departure from earth. It is a contrast which seems all in favour of the disciple rather than the Master; for whilst there has been tranquility, and even triumph, in those who have been dying in the faith of the Redeemer, there was perturbation and anguish in that Redeemer Himself. The bold defender of truth has gone up to the stake or the scaffold rejoicing in being thought worthy to suffer for his Lord, and cheered by bright glimpses which he caught of immortality. How different was the demeanour of Christ when anticipating death from the hands of His enemies! I see Him casting Him-

self on the ground, praying that "if it be possible the cup might pass from Him;" &c. I hear Him uttering the most touching and thrilling complaints, as though His spirit were sorely disquieted and actually deserted of God. Yes, Christ is evidently not dying "the common death of all" Christians.

But let us see whether on this very account there be not reason for concluding Him to be God's own Son. For what are the causes which commonly make death terrible to men? In the first place, to a perfectly righteous individual nothing would make death so terrible as uncertainty with respect to the immortality of the soul. To the good man the thought of annihilation would be utterly insupportable.

But now let us view Christ as nothing more than an eminently righteous man who is about to submit to death to confirm the doctrines which he had taught. Died there ever the man so certified of the great truth of the soul's immortality? Had He not been Himself the preacher of that truth? (2 Tim. i. 10). . . . But what are we to say when we behold Him literally overcome with terror, manifesting a perturbation which could not be exceeded if the future were all darkness, or there were even a knowledge that the soul perished with the body? Oh! we can only say that the agony of the Mediator proves Him less than man, or more than man. It is what no mere man, at least no mere Christian man, passing from one world to another, with just his own account to make up and his own pains to undergo, ever had, or could have, to sustain. We think ourselves warranted in calling upon you to apply the reasoning of our text; and to conclude that God had sent Christ as a propitiation for sin, forasmuch as He does not "die the common death of all men;" and is not "visited after the visitation of all men."

We go on to observe, that however assured a man might be as to the soul's immortality, he might be harrassed

with doubts as to his acceptance with God; and this would necessarily produce a painful shrinking from the act of dissolution. In ordinary cases it is just herein that the distressing thing lies. This is true in the case of the righteous. We cannot be surprised if they are sometimes daunted as they view death at hand.

But now, can you think that there ever lived the man so persuaded of the favour of God, so secure of happiness at death, as Jesus of Nazareth? Had He not been pure in thought, and word, and deed; so that there could be no place for repentance, as there had been none for sin? And was He not thoroughly certain that He was about to enter on a recompense such as had never been awarded to any created being? (Heb. xii. 2). Who then shall meet death composedly—who triumphantly—if not Jesus Christ? But how is the expectation answered? That afflicted and agitated Man, prostrated on the ground, trembling and astonished and convulsed—is this the Being who has everything in His favour, and over whom we have felt it impossible that death could exert any terrifying power? What account do we give of this? This should make you feel that He must be sustaining some lofty and responsible character—that in the scene which is so counter to expectation He has to bear some vast burden which that character entails. We contend that the doctrine of the atonement—the doctrine that Christ died as a sin-offering and propitiation for the offences of the world—furnishes the only explanation of the anguish and the horrors of the sufferer.

Blessed be His name! we may meet death with confidence, because He met it in terror; for "by His stripes we are healed." He took away the sting of death, but it was by bearing that sting in His own soul; He scattered the darkness of the grave, but it was by Himself enduring the eclipse of the face of His Father.—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 31-35.)

These verses warrant the following observations :—

I. That God vindicates the character of His faithful servants from the misrepresentations by which they may be assailed.

By this stern judgment on the rebels, Jehovah fulfilled the word of His servant Moses, and splendidly vindicated the character and calling of both Moses and Aaron. By it He also honoured the extraordinary confidence which Moses had exercised in Him, in the calm and unshaken declaration which he made that God would manifest in a certain miraculous manner whether He had commissioned him or not. God always honours the faith of His servants; and they may confidently leave the vindication of their character and call to Him. Such vindication may be delayed, but it is certain. Comp. *Psa.* xxxvii. 5, 6.

II. That the Divine threatenings are certain of fulfilment.

“And it came to pass, as He had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder under them,” &c. The declarations of His judgment against sin are spoken not merely *in terrorem*. His threatenings are as true as His promises. If any soul will persist in rebellion against God he will find to his cost that the punishment denounced against sin will be inflicted. (a)

III. That everything in the universe may be employed by God as the instrument of His judgments.

In this history we find that the earth and the forces that are at work within it were the instruments of His judgment upon Dathan and Abiram, and the fire upon Korah and the two hundred and fifty who burnt incense. (b)

IV. That the wicked often involve those who are innocent of their sins in the consequences of such sins.

“The earth opened her mouth, and

swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods,” &c. (vers. 32, 33). Thus these rebels brought destruction upon others. Some of the penalties of sin seldom fall merely upon the sinner. One man sins, and others suffer by reason of his sins. (See notes on this point on pp. 34 and 264.) This fact—

1. *Shows the heinousness of sin.*

2. *Should act as a restraint from sin.*

V. That hardened rebels are prone to cry out when the judgment of God falls upon them.

When the judgment of God fell upon them the rebels cried out so lamentably that the people who were round about fled in alarm lest the same judgment should overtake them. A little while ago they were bold and defiant; now they are terror-stricken. “Who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?”

1. *Their cries were selfish.* They were the expression of terror, not of repentance.

2. *Their cries were too late.* They should have cried before, while mercy might have been obtained; but now their cries are utterly in vain. Comp. *Prov.* i. 24-31. (c)

VI. That the judgments of God occasion alarm amongst men.

“And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.” “Others’ ruins should be our warnings.” Generally the alarm which is awakened by the Divine judgments speedily passes away (as it did in this case) and leaves no good result. “Law and terrors do but harden.”

Conclusion.

Here is very solemn warning to impenitent sinners. “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take these away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.” (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Is God all-mighty, all-mighty? Then do not imagine you can escape His judgments. His lightnings find us out. His sharp spear penetrates our secrecy. You have evaded Him now fifty years, and you think you can do it fifty more. Believe me, as speaking the word of the Lord, *you cannot*. Has the ox that has been driven into the fat pasture escaped the knife? Look at the noble animal there. Look at the rich grass or clover, and see the sunshine falling upon the scene, and the ox says, "I am at rest, I have escaped the knife of the slayer," not knowing that the pasture is on the way to the slaughter-house, and that next to its death stands the rich blessing of its life. There are many oxen that are being prepared for the slaughter when they little think it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) Mark here, how all creatures obey their Creator, and are at His commandment: when God willeth the earth to open her mouth, it openeth: when He willeth it to swallow, it swalloweth up: when He willeth it to close again, it closeth: when He willeth the fire to come down, it cometh: and to consume, it consumeth. The sounding of the rams' horns threw down the high walls of Jericho at His commandment. The waters of the Red Sea stood still, and Jordan fled back at His word. The fire could not burn, nor the lions devour when it pleased the Almighty. Acknowledge therefore His infinite power for our instruction; and let us rest upon it in all dangers for our consolation.—*Attersoll*.

God is not confined to one method of punishment. He toucheth a man's bones, and they melt; He breathes upon a man's brain, and henceforth he is not able to think. He comes in at night-time, and shakes the foundations of man's most trusted towers, and in the morning there is nought but a heap of ruins. He disorganizes men's memories, and in an instant they confuse all the recollections of their life-time; He touches man's tongue, and the fluent speaker becomes a stammerer. He breaks the staff in twain, and he who was relying upon it is thrown down in utter helplessness.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point see p. 252.

(c) Now these rebels begin to cry, but they cry out and howl when it is too late: they should have cried unto God for mercy and forgiveness while it was time and pardon was offered. Thus no doubt did many men of the

old world cry out when they were in the water, but then the acceptable time was past; they should have watered their hearts with the tears of repentance when Noah preached unto them. The Sodomites no doubt cried out when fire and brimstone was come down upon them, but they should have cried to God when He cried to them by Lot whom He sent among them. But then was the time of judgment; the time of mercy was gone and past. So it was with Esau, when he had sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, he cried with a great cry and a bitter, but it was too late. Heb. xii. 17; Gen. xxvii. 38. So did the rich man, being in hell in torments, Luke xvi. 23; then he called for mercy, but mercy was departed from him. Here is time and place for mercy, but there is no mercy to be had in hell. The earth is the school of instruction; hell is the house of correction. There the reprobate cry and yell, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, but it is without ease, without end, without profit. They that could shed never a tear to God in this life, shall be constrained to shed abundance of tears in the pit of destruction. The tears of repentance that we pour out ascend up unto heaven, and are kept in a bottle of remembrance; but the tears that are wrung from the reprobate in hell, are never gathered up, nor regarded of God, and are utterly unprofitable to ourselves. Let it therefore be our wisdom to make use of the time of God's mercy and patience, and know that there is no place of repentance after this life.—*Attersoll*.

(d) When the death-thirst is in your throat, what do you think you will do without God? To die in God's presence, is simply to let life blossom into something better than life; but to die without God must be horrible! You will not want your boon companions then. The drink will not pacify you then. Music will have no charms for you then. The love of a tender and gentle wife can yield you but sorry comfort then. You may have your money bags at your side, but they will not calm your palpitating heart then. You will hear the booming of the waves of the great sea of eternity; you will feel your feet slipping into the dreadful quicksand; you will clutch about for help, but there will be none! Instead thereof invisible hands shall begin to pull you down, and down through the dark sea you must descend to those darker depths, where dread despair will be your everlasting heritage.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

THE JUDGMENT OF KORAH.

(Verses 31-33.)

A reference to the words of Moses recorded in verses 29 and 30, will show that the death of these men was a

supernatural event. Moses foretells the exact manner in which it should take place; he calls it "a new thing;"

he stakes his Divine commission upon it—"Hereby shall ye know that Jehovah has sent me." It was new as the dividing of the Red Sea had been new, or the standing still of the sun in after days in obedience to the command of Joshua, and was as miraculous as either of those events. God alone could have given such an attestation to the mission of a man; the death of Korah was an emphatic and terrible answer to the charges which had been brought against Moses; and its following so immediately upon his words adds another supernatural element to the event. We may learn from it and from what led to it—

1. That the human character which most approaches perfection, and the most qualified leader of men, may be falsely accused by those to whom he is a blessing. Probably Moses never had a superior either in character or ability, yet to him it was said, "Ye take too much upon you" (ver. 3).

2. It must depend upon the *character* and not upon the *number* of the people whether their voice is to be taken as the voice of God. Nearly all Israel, it appears (ver. 21), were with Korah and his associates, yet Moses, although almost alone, had God and right on his side.

3. That God will, sooner or later, vindicate those of His servants who have been falsely accused. False charges have rested upon many for *centuries*, and at the end of that time the truth has come to light. There is to be a day which shall "declare it" (1 Cor. iii. 13). The Son of God lived and died under false accusation, but He was vindicated by His resurrection; and when He shall be revealed from heaven "with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14), He will bring to light men's hidden motives, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.—*From "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament."*

A MEMORIAL OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 36-40.)

These verses teach the following important truths:—

I. That things appropriated to religious uses should be reverently regarded.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning; for they are hallowed . . . for they offered them before the Lord; therefore they are hallowed." Comp. Lev. xxvii. 28. For notes and an illustration on this point, see pp. 56, 57. (a)

II. That the designs and doings of wicked men are overruled by God for the accomplishment of His purposes.

"The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar." In this way "God's altar was *protected* by the means which had been used to *violate* its sanctity." "Surely the wrath

of man shall praise Thee." We have a striking illustration of this in the sins of Joseph's brethren, and the way in which they were used by God for the carrying out of His gracious designs. Comp. Gen. i. 20.

III. That he who sins against God injures himself.

"These sinners against their own souls," or, "against their own lives." By sin man injures himself *physically*. When the laws of health are violated disease and misery follow. By sin man injures himself *morally*. Sin blunts the spiritual sensibilities, stifles the aspirations, and quenches the hopes of the soul, &c. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." (b)

IV. That the judgments of God should be remembered and heeded.

These broad plates for a covering of the altar were to "be a sign unto the

children of Israel. . . . a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company." Man is prone to think that he may sin, and escape the punishment of his sin, notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence against such a notion; hence the importance of memorials such as this. The sternest judgments of God are speedily lost sight of by those who most need to keep them in mind; therefore this memorial was

fitted to answer a useful end in reminding the people of this judgment, and so deterring them from sin. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition." "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Conclusion:

Seeing that God is so concerned to guard us against sin, it surely behoves us to flee from it as from our worst foe.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The Christian dispensation, although it is a dispensation of universality, and bases all its promises and sanctions upon the fact of spiritual service, has not annulled the seemingly and the sacred in connection with the worship of God. The false pride of Gerizim is humbled by its superior light. The haughtiness which would build an exclusive altar at Jerusalem is rebuked by every word of its inspired lips. It proclaims that everywhere where need compels, and where hearts prompt, and where the wealth of love constrains the offering, man may build a temple and look for acceptance and blessing. But it nowhere approves the idea that all places are equally sacred, or that God has ceased to visit Zion, and to dwell in its tabernacles with His manifestations of peculiar regard. There is a sentimental devotion that has become very fashionable now-a-days, a sort of spurious spirituality, minced out commonly from the lips of most unspiritual people—a kind of domestic pantheism, whose flame of devotion is too subtle to be kindled in houses made with hands. They tell us—and it is true—that the heart which God has touched will find Him everywhere, in every

gracious prodigality of nature, and in every bounteous ministry of life; that to His tuned spirit the wild heatherbells sing Sabbath knells. Well, it is true; but it is true also—a profounder truth in theory, and a commoner experience in fact—that God has special honours for the places that are devoted to His worship; and it is true, too, that the spirit tuned to the music of the sanctuary is the keenest in its recognition of those tremulous airs of worship-song which are floating all the universe around.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(b) You have heard of the Spartan youth who concealed a stolen fox under his garment, and although it was eating into his bowels, he would not show it, and therefore died through the creature's bites. You are of that sort, sinner; you are carrying sin in your bosom, and it is eating out your heart. God knows what it is, and you know what it is. Now, you cannot keep it there and be unbitten, undestroyed. Why keep it there? Oh, cry to God with a vehement cry, God save me from my sin! Oh, bring me, even me, to the foot of Thy Son's cross, and forgive me, and then crucify my sin, for I see clearly now that sin must perish or I must.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE COVERING OF THE ALTAR, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 38.)

Let us inquire what these plates on the altar would teach the people.

I. How futile it is for any one to oppose God, and how God can make the opposition of men helpful to His cause.

How easily God brings down the pride of man! No weapon that is

formed against Him can prosper. (Job ix. 4.) "He is wise"—man cannot outwit Him: "He is mighty in strength"—man cannot overcome Him. To oppose Him is only to place thorns and briars before a consuming fire: the attempt is foolish, fruitless, and destructive. Angels rebelled, and it was

their ruin. Pharaoh opposed God, and he was destroyed. It was the same with the people in the Wilderness. These plates would be lasting witnesses of the madness and the futility of opposing God.

Further, they teach that God can make use of the very opposition, and turn what was meant to be destructive to be helpful to His cause. These censers were designed to be rivals to those of Aaron; the avowed object of the rebels was to take the priesthood from the family of Aaron and to make the altar common property. What did God do? He caused these very censers to be made into plates for a covering of the altar, so as to preserve it from the action of the fire that was ever burning on it. God permits evil, but He ever controls it (Psalm lxxvi. 10). We should never tremble for the success of God's work. As a matter of fact no opposition has ever hurt His work. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." In all history we see Him working out His own wise, great, and good purposes from the tangled web of human life.

II. That God wishes one age to learn from another.

His treatment of men is not only punitive, but educational. These plates were for a memorial; they were to "be a sign," &c. God did not want the event to be forgotten. He teaches us through human life. The Bible to a great extent is made up of biography—brief records of human lives. God shows us how one prospers, and where another fails; and He means one age to learn from another. The wrecks we meet with in society, by drunkenness, gambling and other sins (as with these plates), God holds them up to "be a sign unto" us.

III. That sacred things must be treated reverently.

"They offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed." God was

then teaching the people by practical illustrations, and not by the mere announcing of principles. Thus here He taught them and us the importance of dealing reverently with sacred things. There is need of this lesson in the present day; for there is a tendency to "pooh pooh" many things which our fathers held sacred. Human reason is enthroned: Divine things are brought to its bar, and are very freely and irreverently handled. It is so in respect of the Bible, the Lord's day, the fundamental truths of Christianity, &c. "Hands off" these sacred things! they are hallowed to the Lord; let us not treat them as if they were ordinary things.

IV. That the sinner ever injures himself.

God speaks of these men as "sinners against their own souls," or lives. They had brought ruin on themselves. These plates would teach the people that "the way of transgressors is hard," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and "he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." Sin robs God, does harm to others, but it ruins none but the doer of it. Every sin of man is a wrong to his own nature: we see it so physically, mentally, and morally. Every sin is a transgression of some law, and the broken law insists on its penalty. Sin hardens the soul, deprives it of good, alienates it from God, defiles it, shuts it from heaven, makes it only fit for hell, and exposes it to the eternal curse. Through these plates God cries to the sinful, "Do thyself no harm."

Conclusion:—

1. *What folly is a life of sin!* The Biblical definition of a sinner is—*a Fool*.

2. *To obey God and to please Him is true wisdom.* He ever seeks our good, knows what is best for us, so in obeying Him we do ourselves the greatest possible good.—*David Lloyd*.

THE AGGRAVATED REBELLION OF THE PEOPLE, THE EFFECTUAL INTERCESSION OF THE GOOD, AND THE JUSTICE AND MEROY OF GOD.

(Verses 41-50.)

Consider:—

I. The aggravated rebellion of the people.

"On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." In this fresh outbreak of rebellion we have—

1. *Terrible disregard of Divine warnings.* These people had witnessed judgment after judgment because of rebellion; only yesterday they had seen Dathan and Abiram swallowed up by earthquake, and Korah and his company consumed by fire from the Lord, yet to-day they break out into rebellion again. Warnings seem to be utterly lost upon them. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck," &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

2: *Base ingratitude to Moses and Aaron.* "They murmured against Moses and against Aaron," &c. It seems as if the people believed "that Moses and Aaron had used some cunning in this business, and that the earthquake and fire were artificial; else, had they discerned the hand of God in this punishment, could they have dared the anger of the Lord in the very face of justice?" Their charge against Moses and Aaron was utterly unjust and basely ungrateful. It was owing to the intercession of these holy men (ver. 22) that the whole congregation was not consumed; yet, &c.

3. *Profane characterization of the wicked as the people of God.* They speak of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their confederates, as "the people of the Lord." Thus they justify the ungodly; they canonise the most stout-hearted rebels as saints of the Lord. This rebellion seems to us the worst which has arisen in the history of this rebellious people. The time of its occurrence—immediately after most awful judgments; the form which it assumed,

this malicious charge against Moses and Aaron; and its reason, their sympathy with hardened rebels whom God had destroyed, render this rebellion one of fearful aggravations. How powerless are the sternest judgments to change men's sinful hearts, or effectually to restrain from sin! Only the grace of God can do this.

II. The speedy interposition of Jehovah.

"And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared," &c. (vers. 42-45). Thus God interposes by:—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* "The cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared." "As the cloud rested continually above the tabernacle during the time of encampment (chap. ix. 18 sqq.; Exod. xl. 38), we must suppose that at this time the cloud covered it in a fuller and much more conspicuous sense, just as it had done when the tabernacle was first erected (chap. ix. 15; Exod. xl. 34), and that at the same time the glory of God burst forth from the dark cloud in amiraculous splendour."—*Keil and Del.* This was done for—(1) A security to His servants. (2) A check to the rebels.

2. *The declaration of the desert of the rebels.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment." Had they been so consumed, who could have questioned the righteousness of their doom?

III. The effectual intercession of Moses and Aaron.

When God spake to Moses about consuming the congregation, he and Aaron "fell upon their faces" in humble and earnest prayer to Him for the guilty

people. Moses discovered that the plague had begun; he directed Aaron to "take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar," &c. (vers. 46-48).

Notice here:—

1. *The kindness of Moses and Aaron.* The congregation had risen up in rebellion against them; this plague was the punishment inflicted by God because of the rebellion; yet Moses and Aaron entreated God to spare the rebellious people. Freely they forgive them. Their conduct reminds us of Him who prayed, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (a)

2. *The courage of Aaron.* He feared neither the excited people who were embittered against him, nor the pestilence which was smiting down the people by thousands; but "ran into the midst of the congregation," &c.

3. *The zeal of Aaron.* He was now an old man, yet he "ran into the midst," &c. An example for Christian ministers.

4. *The success of Aaron.* "The plague was stayed." His intercession was accepted by God, and it availed to arrest the advance of the pestilence. In this we have very striking confirmation of his priesthood. "Compare the censer

of Aaron here with 'the censers of those sinners against their own souls.' Those provoked God's anger, this pacified it; those destroyed men's lives, this saved them; no room therefore is left to doubt of Aaron's call to the priesthood."

How great is the power of prayer! (James v. 16-18). (b)

If God thus respected the sacrifice and intercession of Aaron, how great must be the efficacy of the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ!

IV. The exercise of the justice and mercy of God.

1. *Here is an impressive display of Divine justice.* "They that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred." (c)

2. *Here is an encouraging manifestation of Divine mercy.* Notwithstanding the aggravated and oft-repeated provocations of the people, they were not all destroyed. It was of the Lord's mercies that they were not all consumed. (d)

Conclusion. Learn—

1. *The heinousness of sin.*

2. *The great value of a faithful ministry.*

3. *The readiness of God to forgive sin.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A forgiving spirit is a noble, generous Christian virtue. It takes its rise in that love of God and man which is the fruit of the Spirit and the fulfilling of the law; it is made up of love and forbearance, united with the tenderness of compassion towards those who have injured us, and fortified by some just sense of our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness from God. In the full sense of the thing itself, it consists of the inward spirit of forgiveness and the outward act of reconciliation. It belongs to the heart, just as every other grace has its seat in the inner man. In this view of it, it is the opposite of revenge, which angrily seeks redress for injuries by inflicting injuries in return. It is the inward exercise of kindness and goodwill towards our enemies and those who have wronged us. It is an abhorrence of their wrong, yet a kind regard for the wrongdoer. It cannot be genuine unless it be accompanied by these benevolent emotions, and at a great remove from all bitterness and wrath. God requires that we forgive from the heart. This inward spirit ought to be always in exercise, whatsoever may be the character of those who have

injured us, and whatever their present and future conduct. We may feel benevolently towards them, without at all committing ourselves in favour of their conduct or character. They may repeat the injury they have done us every day of their lives, but this does not warrant in us the spirit of malignity or unkindness. We should love them still, and do them good as we have opportunity.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(b) The conduct of the eminent and justly celebrated Francke, in the establishment of the hospital and school for the poor, at Halle, near Glaucha, in Saxony, is well known. Having no permanent funds to meet the expenses, it may be easily supposed that the good man would be frequently reduced to great difficulties; at such times the interpositions of the Providence of God were truly remarkable. About Easter, 1696, he knew not where to obtain money for the expenses of the ensuing week; but when their food was reduced to the very last morsel, one thousand crowns were contributed by some entirely unknown person. At another time, all their provisions were exhausted, and the good

minister wisely presented his requests to the God of mercy, who careth even for the ravens when they cry. When prayer was over, just as he was taking his seat, a friend from a distance arrived with fifty crowns, which was shortly followed by twenty more. At another period, the workmen wanted thirty crowns, when he remarked that he had no money, but that he trusted in God; scarcely had he uttered the sentence, when, in this moment of necessity, the precise sum arrived. "Another time," says Francke, "all our provision was spent; but in addressing myself to the Lord, I found myself deeply affected with the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread;' and my thoughts were fixed in a more special manner upon the words 'this day,' because on the very same day we had great occasion for it. While I was yet praying, a friend of mine came before my door in a coach, and brought the sum of four hundred crowns."—*R. Arvine, A.M.*

(c) Goodness may punish; nay, it must punish the ill-deserving. A good law punishes; a good judge punishes; and the more certainly because they are good. However inclined to forgive the Divine Lawgiver may be, and however strongly moved to acts of mercy by the tenderness of His own kind nature, justice has claims as well as clemency and compassion. And what shall countervail these righteous demands? Reason cannot; conscience dare not. The whole history of the Divine government is proof that sin cannot go unpunished. The nature of the Deity forbids it; because He is just and righteous as well as good and kind. His law forbids it, and stands forth a pledge to the universe that it knows no such thing as impunity for crime. It is essential to the character of God as Law-

giver, that wherever the claims of the law are violated, His authority be enforced by the infliction of its penalty; otherwise it is no longer law, and He no longer Lawgiver.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(d) The Scriptures everywhere magnify the mercy of God, and speak of it with all possible advantage, as if the Divine nature, which does in all perfections excel every other thing, did in this perfection excel itself. And of this we have a farther conviction, if we but lift up our eyes to God, and then, turning them upon ourselves, begin to consider how many evils and miseries that every day we are exposed to, by His preventing mercy are hindered, or, when they were coming upon us, stopped or turned another way. How oft our punishment has He deferred by His forbearing mercy; or, when it was necessary for our chastisement, mitigated and made light! How oft we have been supported in our afflictions by His comforting mercy, and visited with the light of His countenance, in the exigencies of our soul, and the gloominess of despair! How oft we have been supplied by His relieving mercy in our wants, and, when there was no hand to succour, and no soul to pity us, His arm has been stretched out to lift us from the mire and clay, and, by a providential train of events, brought about our sustenance and support! And, above all, how daily, how hourly, how minutely we offend against Him; and yet, by the power of His pardoning mercy, we are still alive! For, considering the multitude and heinousness of our provocations, "it is of His mercy alone that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. Who so is wise will ponder these things, and He will understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."—*Archbishop Tillotson.*

THE SIN OF MAN AND THE SALVATION OF GOD.

(Verse 46.)

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Israel's judgments were recorded for our warning; Israel's mercies, for our encouragement. What Israel was, we are; what Israel suffered, we deserve; what Israel enjoyed, in the way of mercy, we may hope for.

The principle of all this is very plain. Human beings placed in the same circumstances act very much in the same manner. They have the same hopes and the same fears, they display the same obduracy and the same guilt;

and they can only be saved in the same mysterious manner. And, accordingly, God's methods of grace towards them are essentially the same in all ages. The censer and the incense and the atonement of Aaron may fitly remind us of the work and intercession of our great High Priest.

I. There is an awful controversy between a holy God and a rebellious world.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague has begun." A sentence of death has been passed upon every soul of man. Many have already perished, &c. The world some of us

deem so fair and happy, is nothing better than the camp of Israel;—a scene of mercy, it is true; but yet a scene of misery, terror, and death. Our sin resembles theirs in many aspects, and has the same aggravations.

1. *As it directly strikes against the authority and the grace of God, whatever be the form it assumes.* Israel professedly murmured against Moses and Aaron, but God viewed it as rebellion against Himself. How different often is sin from what sin appears. "Ye have killed the people of the Lord;" but it was not Moses that killed them, but God Himself. . . . God struck a blow which no human arm could have inflicted to punish them for their murmurings, and in a moment fourteen thousand and seven hundred die of the plague by His omnipotent hand.

Learn that all sin, whatever form it assumes, is in reality committed against God. When the undutiful child rises against his parent, he rebels against God. When we complain of our circumstances and lot in life, we rebel against God. When we refuse the messages of His mercy, and neglect the great salvation, we rebel against God. If the office of Moses and Aaron were so much to be regarded, how much more the work and office of God's beloved Son! Comp. Heb. xii. 25.

Often when we complain of *second causes* in our afflictions we sin against God. We must take heed how we push God out of His own world. He will be acknowledged in our afflictions as well as in our mercies. Comp. Job xxxvi. 24. Israel failed here. In reality they justified Korah and his companions in their rebellion, and secretly condemned the judgment of God against them as severe and harsh. But God will be

justified when He speaks, and be clear when He judges. He will be acknowledged in the judgments that desolate our families and wring our souls with anguish, as in the mercies which yield unmixed gladness and delight.

2. *As it is often committed in the face of frequent and awful warnings.* Many deem it hard to believe this obduracy of Israel, and would think it almost too bad to be true. But the man who knows himself believes it all. Which of us has not despised His warnings, trembling one day at His judgments and making light of them the next? in the hour of sickness binding ourselves by solemn vows to His service, and upon the return of health rising to greater heights of iniquity than before?

3. *As it is heightened by the experience of God's preserving and upholding mercy.*

II. There is at hand a prescribed and Divinely approved remedy.

When wrath was gone out from God, Moses was quick-sighted to discern it, and as prompt to apply the remedy. Yet observe, Moses does not take upon him this reconciliation; he calls upon Aaron to do so. I know not which to admire more, the courage or the mercy of Aaron.

1. *That our only escape from threatened wrath is through the mediation and advocacy of our High Priest.* As the trembling Israelites found in Aaron an interposer and deliverer, so may we find in Christ a Saviour.

2. *That the plan of Salvation by Faith is as efficacious in reality as it is simple in its mode of application.*

3. *That an immediate application to it is our only protection against certain ruin.* "Go quickly."—*The late Samuel Thodey.*

AN AWFUL PLAGUE AND A SURPRISING REMEDY.

(Verses 46-48)

The solemn duties devolving upon the ministers of religion can never be too deeply contemplated by themselves, or

too seriously considered by their hearers. It is of consequence to us, that we may clearly apprehend our duty; of conse-

quence to *them*, that by estimating our responsibility they may judge of their own. If both speakers and hearers could see things now as they must see them very soon, when Death has done his office, when the trumpet shall sound, and the books be opened, and the retributions of eternity shall take place, what a change would be produced both in our ministrations and in your worship. (*a*)

A very noble spirit displayed by Moses and Aaron. They had been deeply injured, yet, &c.

I. An awful spectacle exhibited.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun." It was awful in itself—awful in its causes—its concomitants—its issues; for after death, the judgment. Awful to see the thousands of Israel in high rebellion against God, to see the countenance maddened with rage, suddenly smitten with disease, then convulsed with anguish, then numbered with the dead.

It was the more awful, as it was not a cursory thing following in the ordinary course of events, but it was a direct judgment immediately following the sin—a fearful visitation tremendously signalling the most hardened and obdurate sinners. What a circle is here of sins and judgments! because the people rose up against Moses and Aaron, therefore God consumed them; and because God consumed them, therefore they rose up against Moses and Aaron; and now their third rebellion draws down a more awful visitation. "Though hand join in hand," &c.

O what has sin done! It has turned angels into demons, man into an heir of wrath, Paradise into a wilderness, &c. Other evils are limited—the destructive forces of nature, the earthquake, the volcano, the deluge, the wide-wasting conflagration, know their bound; they have their period and their issue and their appointed range; but sin has none; it lays waste not here and there a country, but a world. The pestilence fastened only upon the body, and after that had no more that it could do; but sin destroys the soul, by sepa-

rating it from the Source of Life—nay, it casts both soul and body into hell.

Mark one impressive circumstance. Moses marks the wrath in its very commencement, sees the beginnings of the pestilence, when no other man discerns or suspects it, even as the physician sees disease in what appears to be the ripe bloom of health, or the veteran sailor marks the prelude of the storm before the heavens have lost their brightness. Moses had heard the word of God in the Tabernacle, &c. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," &c.

There are signs in the moral world of the commencement of evil, and the going forth of wrath, which the wise observer cannot mistake. "The plague is begun." When the man first restrains prayer—when the spirit of the world creeps into the mind of Christians—when they begin to lessen their fear of sin, and to compromise principle, to seek a more accommodating system of religion, to lengthen the creed and shorten the Decalogue—when private prayer is a task, and the minor moralities of life begin to be disregarded—there are fearful symptoms of decay and declension. "The plague is begun."

II. The surprising remedy found.

"Take a censer," &c. Where is the physician who would have recommended this as a cure for the plague? Who would have thought that the appearance of a single priest amidst the dying and the dead should have stopped the progress of the pestilence? Yet the incense and the fire and the oblation accomplish that for Israel which all the wisdom of the Egyptians could never have achieved. Who does not, in like manner, rebel against God's appointed method of pardon? or question the mysterious virtue of Christ's atoning blood, and doubt the efficacy of faith, repentance, and prayer? Who does not say with Naaman, "Are not Abana and Pharpar" &c.?

Mark the promptitude and self-devotion of Aaron. He does not pause, does not cavil at the insufficiency of the means, but thrusts himself into the

post of danger. He stands boldly between the living and the dead, as one who will either die with them or have them live with him. Type of Him who on Calvary said, "Father forgive them." How promptly He came!

Mark the principles illustrated. There is no cure for the evils which sin has introduced but by a sacrifice of atonement. "Without shedding of blood," &c. And as a new offering could not be presented, he was to take the fire from the altar, the ashes of the morning sacrifice, and put incense upon that in the golden censer. If Aaron's sacrifice be thus accepted, how much more the offering of the great High Priest? "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14.)

But it is not enough that the sacrifice be presented, but prayer must be offered. Beautiful to see, wherever Aaron moved, Death retire and Hope

revive. More so to see the spiritually dead quickened (Eph. ii. 4-6).

III. A practical application demanded.

1. *What infinite solemnity attaches to all the offices of religion.* Death and life are involved. The two hundred and fifty men that offered incense perished: their spirit was bad. What if we bring strange fire! Aaron's offering saves life. If awful to preach, so also to hear.

2. *How dreadful if the plague be in the heart, and we, unconscious of danger, neglect the remedy.* "Examine yourselves."

3. *What need ministers have for the prayers and sympathies of their people.* The whole camp looks to Moses and Aaron. We have all the infirmities of which you complain; we are exposed to the infection, &c.

4. *Rejoice in the absolute sufficiency of salvation applied by the Spirit.*—*Samuel Thodey.*

ILLUSTRATION.

(a) I know not what others think of these concerns, but for my own part I am ashamed of my insensibility, and wonder at myself that I deal no more with my own and other men's souls as becomes one who looks for the great day of the Lord. I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smites me that I have not been more serious and fervent. It is no trifling matter to stand up in the face

of a congregation and deliver a message of salvation or damnation as from the living God in the name of the Redeemer: it is no easy thing to speak so plainly that the most ignorant may understand; so seriously that the dearest heart may feel; and so convincingly that contradictory cavillers may be silenced and awakened.—*Richard Baxter.*

THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING.

(Verses 47, 48.)

I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of man who "like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way."

I. Look at Aaron as the lover of the people.

In this case *he* was the aggrieved party. The clamour was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who interceded and saved the people. The old man with generous love hastened into the midst

of the people, &c. Is not this the very picture of our Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonoured Him? &c. Yet He becomes the Saviour of His people.

"Down from the shining *throne above,*
With joyful haste He fled." &c.

Aaron in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of the people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood, &c. But into the midst of their crowd he boldly springs (comp. John i. 11). Jesus transcends Aaron;

Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people; Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there He stood even in the hour of death, waving His censer, staying the plague, &c.

Again, Aaron might have said, "But *the Lord* will surely destroy *me* also with the people; if I go where shafts of death are flying they will reach me." He exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. . . . The plague which Jesus kept from us slew Him. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

Aaron deserves much commendation from the fact that he *ran* into the host. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within. And was it not so with Christ? . . . While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ.

II. View Aaron as the great propitiator.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, &c.

Aaron as the Propitiator is to be looked at as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censer, &c. Behold the Great High Priest! His incense consists first of His positive obedience to the Divine law. Then mixed with this is His blood, &c. Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement.

Besides that, Aaron must be the ordained priest; for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others; their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained One, &c. Comp. Heb. v. 4-10. None but Jesus; all other priests and offerings we disdain.

We must look upon Aaron as being ready for his work. The people were ready to perish, and he was ready to save. Oh, my hearer, Jesus Christ stands ready to save thee now. Trust Him.

III. View Aaron as the interposer.

The old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moveth along a field of corn." Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. "The stripes must fall on Me," He cries. There is nothing between me and hell save Christ. But He is enough. There is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God.

IV. View Aaron as the saviour.

It was Aaron, Aaron's censer, that saved the lives of that great multitude. Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Saviour. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron, &c. If Christ hath saved us He is a gracious Saviour indeed. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God, &c.

Aaron was an unaided saviour. He stands alone! And herein is he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trodden the winepress alone," &c. "There is none other name under heaven," &c.

Aaron as a saviour was all-sufficient. Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, *able* to save; you cannot save yourself, but He *can* save you. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool," &c.

V. Aaron as the divider.

Aaron the anointed one stands here; on that side is death, on this side life; the boundary between life and death is that one man. . . . The one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is *Christ*. A man in Christ is a Christian; a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. On which side, then, art thou to-day?

As Christ is the great divider now, so will He be in the day of judgment. He shall divide them the one from the other, &c. Oh! on which side shall I be when all these transitory things are done away with? &c.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

AARON STAYING THE PLAGUE.

(Verses 47, 48.)

Open with a brief account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the awful punishment which befel them from God. The people on the next day as rebellious as before. The plague begun. Aaron's intercession;—

I. The willingness of Aaron to intercede.

He "ran into the midst," &c., though at this time of great age, above one hundred years. And this willingness will be more manifest, if we observe that he was—

1. *Regardless of the plague*; he feared not the contagion.

2. *Regardless of the people's enmity*; he dreaded not their malice; and forgave the injuries they had done him.

Show how in these respects Aaron was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus. The plague of sin had laid hold of our race; yet see the willingness of Jesus to come (Ps. xl. 7). "Lo, I come."

1. *He shrank not from us because of our pollution* (Rom. viii. 3; Heb. ii. 14-17). Nay, He took upon Him our curse (Gal. iii. 13; Isa. liii.). Our guilt and perishing condition that which moved His compassion.

2. *He did not abandon His work because of our enmity*, but though continually despised, rejected, &c., endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself (Heb. xii. 2, 3; Rom. xv. 3), and would not be turned from His purpose of love.

II. The nature of Aaron's intercession.

He took fire from the altar of *burnt offering*, where the fire was always burning; and he put *incense* upon the fire, that a sweet savour of atonement might ascend to God. So Jesus offers

the sacrifice of His own most precious blood, and perfumes it with the incense of His all-sufficient merit. The sacrifice of Jesus *ever new*; the fire always burning. Jesus interposes between the wrath of God and the perishing sinner. "Father forgive them," &c. "He made intercession for the transgressors." Enlarge upon the intercession of Jesus, —its constancy, its freeness—*spontaneous*.

III. The success of Aaron's intercession.

Aaron's incense more powerful to procure pardon, than the people's guilt to call down punishment. The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and turned away His wrathful indignation.

Observe, *the plague was stayed*. Aaron did not give over interceding until the plague had ceased. So Jesus will never give over interceding for a penitent believer, until the plague of sin is *perfectly done away*. And will never give over interceding for His Church, until *every member* of it has entered glory.

Conclusion :—

1. *Let us tremble at the wrath of an offended God*. Address the sinner. "Who can stand before this HOLY LORD GOD?" What wilt thou do in the day of visitation? No intercessor then.

2. *Let us rejoice in the intercession of our Great High Priest*. What need we any other mediators besides Him? Look at Korah and his company; were their intercessions received? And why not? They were not the *appointed* mediators. Why, then, go to saints and angels—the Virgin Mary?—*J. D. Lane, M.A.*

THE PLAGUE STAYED.

(Verse 48.)

Observe,—
I. The evil.

Murmuring against God. Dissatisfac-

tion with God—His government, &c. Now this is the essence of all *sin*. Holiness is harmony—agreement with

God. Sin, disagreement and murmuring. So it was with the first sin, and every sin since. This leads to irreverence, complaining, and audacious presumption. How these abound—

1. *In profane swearing*,—horrid imprecations.

2. *In Sabbath profanation*. Counted as no sin.

3. *In gross intemperance*.

4. *In general profligacy*.

5. *In scepticism*. Denying God's government, &c.

6. *In recklessness*—amidst Divine judgments.

What a sight for a holy God to behold! I come back to the first idea:—All sin is contrariety to God—dissatisfaction with God; and hence, rebellion against His government.

II. The punishment.

It was,—

1. *Divine*. God did it. No magistrate. No human pain or penalty. God immediately did it. Often sin mediately is its own punishment; but sometimes direct, &c.

2. *It was by the plague*. We do not know precisely what it was. Some sudden disease, which swept all before it. It was, however, evidently—(1) Fatal. Destroyed life. (2) Speedily so. Like a blast of wind, &c. (3) Invariably so. No one knew of a remedy.

How analogous is the nature and effect of sin! (1) Sin is the disease of the soul. (2) It is deadly in three senses—temporal, spiritual, and eter-

nal. (3) There is for it no human remedy. All human skill, &c. failed.

III. The remedy.

1. *In itself, not apparently adapted*. Doubtless, the air was charged with death. But the incense was not possibly adapted to decompose, and change, and purify.

2. *It was connected with pious intercession*. In which there was confession of sin, admission of the justice of God, and the Divine mercy was implored. It was a direct appeal to God.

3. *It was intercession grounded on sacrifice*. By the priest, in view of the victims presented to God.

4. *It was efficient*. Completely. At once.

Let us now turn to the great remedy for sin. It is, (1) Not what human philosophy would have recommended. (2) It is essentially connected with the priestly work of Christ. His obedience, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, intercession. (3) It is *effectual*. The curse removed, wrath averted, mercy published, life offered. None need now die, no, not one. The connecting link between a guilty world and the remedy is, on God's part, the preaching of the Word; on our part, believing the Word so preached; by which repentance, humiliation of soul, and devotedness to God, are secured. Learn,—

1. *The extreme evil of sin*.

2. *The riches of the grace of God*.

3. *The immediate duty of the sinner*; to call earnestly on the Lord.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

CHAPTER XVII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter the High-priesthood of Aaron is further confirmed by a supernatural and significant sign.

Verse 4. *The testimony*, “i.e., the Two Tables of the Law; cf. Exod. xxv. 16. No doubt the rods lay in front of the Tables within the Ark.”—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 5. *I will make to cease from Me*.

“שָׁכַב, *Hiph.*, to cause to sink, to bring to rest, construed with נָחַל in a pregnant signification, to quiet in such a way that it will not rise again.”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 6. *Twelve rods*. “Possibly the two tribes of the children of Joseph were reckoned together, as in Deut.

xxvii. 12. But as these two tribes had separate princes, and it was with the names of the princes that the rods were marked (ver. 2), it is more probable that the whole number of rods was twelve exclusively of Aaron's, as the Vulgate expressly renders ('*fuernnt virgæ duodecimabsque virga Aaron*').—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 8. *Yielded almonds.* "Or rather 'ripened almonds,' i.e., 'brought forth ripe almonds.' Probably different portions of the rod showed the several stages of the process of fructification through which those parts which had advanced the furthest had passed. The name almond in Hebrew denotes the 'waking tree,' the 'waking fruit;' and is applied to this tree because it blossoms early in the season. It serves here, as in Jer. i. 11, 12, to set forth the speed and certainty with which, at God's will, His purposes are accomplished."—*Ibid.* "This was miraculous . . . for no ordinary branch would have buds, blossoms, and fruits upon it, all at once."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 10. *For a token, &c.* Keil and Del. translate: "For a sign for the rebellious, that thou putttest an end to

their murmuring, and they die not." Aaron's rod was probably lost while the Ark was in the hands of the Philistines; for it is stated in 1 Kings viii. 9 that there was "nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone."

Verses 12, 13. "A new section should begin with these verses. They are connected retrospectively with chap. xvi.; and form the immediate introduction to chap. xviii. The people were terror-stricken with the fate of the company of Korah at the door of the tabernacle, followed up by the plague in which so many thousands of their numbers had perished. Presumption passes by reaction into despair. Was there any approach for them to the tabernacle of the Lord? Was there any escape from death, except by keeping aloof from His presence? The answers are supplied by the ordinances that follow; ordinances which testified that the God of judgment was still a God of grace and of love."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. Keil and Del. translate: "Every one who comes near to the dwelling of Jehovah dies; are we all to die?"

THE DIVINE PLAN FOR VINDICATING THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD OF AARON, AND ITS MORAL TEACHING.

(Verses 1-5.)

The directions which are here given to Moses teach us—

I. That true ministers of religion are elected by God.

In directing Moses to place these rods in the tabernacle, the Lord promises to meet with him there, and He says, "And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom." God called Aaron to his office (Heb. v. 4). He here makes arrangements for confirming that call, and placing it beyond dispute. To enter the Christian ministry for its honours, or its emoluments, &c., is an awful sin. To refuse to enter it when convinced of the Divine call thereto is

also a sin. The authority of the true minister of Christ arises from his being sent forth by God. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 28; Gal. i. 1; Eph. iv. 7-13. (a)

II. It is of great importance that men should know that their ministers of religion are called by God.

The Lord here makes arrangements for His own miraculous interposition, in order that the Israelites might be completely convinced of the Divine authority of Aaron in his office. It is important that people should be convinced of the Divine call of their ministers, in order that—

1. *They might regard them with becoming respect.* They are ambassadors for

Christ; and should be treated as such. Comp. John xiii. 20; Phil. ii. 29; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. v. 17.

2. *They might take heed to their message.* If the ministers of Christ come to be regarded as mere lecturers on religious themes, having no authority from God, their ministry will be productive of little true and lasting good. Crowds may gather round the eloquent preacher, but they will be like those which gathered round the ancient prophet (Ezek. xxxiii. 30-32). When people see in their ministers a Christlike life, and manifest fitness for their sacred duties, and the signs of the Divine approval of their ministry, let them rest assured that such ministers have their commission from God, and their ministry should be received accordingly. "Despise not prophesyings." "Take heed how ye hear." (b)

III. *The vitality of sin is of dreadful tenacity.*

The miraculous sign for which Moses is directed to make arrangements was necessary to completely subdue the murmurings of the children of Israel. The previous judgments, although so numerous and terrible, had not effectually destroyed their tendency to mur-

mur against the leaders whom God had appointed. "Many men's lips," says Trapp, "like rusty hinges, for want of the oil of grace and gladness, move not without murmuring and complaining." It is a thing of extreme difficulty to eradicate any evil disposition from the human heart. "For such is the habitual hardness of men's hearts, as neither ministry, nor misery, nor miracle, nor mercy, can possibly mollify. Nothing can do it, but an extraordinary touch from the hand of Heaven." (c)

IV. *God is engaged in eradicating sin from human hearts.*

"I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel," &c. He cries to the sinner, "O do not this abominable thing, which I hate." His laws are all against sin. The great redemptive mission of Jesus Christ aims at the destruction of sin. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (d)

Since God is thus engaged, we may confidently anticipate that the crusade against sin will be gloriously triumphant. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The ministry is the Divinely-appointed agency for the communication of God's will to man. As a Divine institution, it advanced its claims in the beginning, and in no solitary instance have they been relinquished since. This Divine authorization and enactment are still in force. The Bible says, when Christ ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There might be something special, perhaps, in this original commission, but the principle of its Divine origin is evidently presented as the principle of the ministry itself; for St. Paul, who was not then called, who speaks of himself afterwards as one born out of due time, earnestly and anxiously vindicates the heavenly origin of his apostleship: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not of men; for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." This it is

which is the elevation of the Christian ministry, which exalts it far above human resources and human authority. It travels on in its own majestic strength—Heaven-inspired and Heaven-sustained. Moreover, the same passage which tells us of the institution of the ministry, announces its duration, and tells of the period when it shall be no longer needed, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This period, thus Divinely appointed for the cessation of the ministry, has obviously not yet arrived.—*W. M. Punshon, L.L.D.*

It would appear to be a difficult lesson for the Church to learn, that God will choose His own instruments. In spite of a thousand proofs of sovereignty on this matter, the Church will stubbornly try to have a hand in the choice of ministers. Now that civilization has become a very devil to us, we say that God's agents shall not be carpenters, fishermen, tent-makers, or ploughmen. No, certainly not; they shall be sons of gentlemen; they shall

have hands unhardened by labour; they shall be favourites of conventional fortune. God will not have this; He will not be indebted to His creatures. The shepherd shall be entrusted with His thunder, and the husbandman shall wield His lightnings; the little child shall subdue the dragon, and the suckling shall not be afraid of the cockatrice.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) How many hear the Gospel, but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange—they read it with both their eyes—will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade—how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practise what they have gathered from it. A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it—as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot to the “i” had dropped off the letter; or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticise the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice. Oh, how men will hear and think it to be right, to be the height of perfection, to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one doot whether you did or did not like his sermon, his business being not to please your tastes, but to save your souls; not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) That plant must possess great vitality which increases by being uprooted and cut down. That which lives by being killed is strangely full of force. That must be a very hard substance which is hardened by lying in the blast furnace, in the central heat of the

fire, where iron melts and runs like wax. That must be a very terrible power which gathers strength from that which should restrain it, and rushes on the more violently in proportion as it is reined in. Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life. It makes Heaven’s gifts the stepping stones to hell, uses the lamps of the temple to show the way to perdition, and makes the Ark of the Lord, as in Uzzah’s case, the messenger of death. Sin is that strange fire which burns the more fiercely for being damped, finding fuel in the water which was intended to quench it. The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good. It is a deadly evil; judge ye how deadly! O that men knew its nature and abhorred it with all their hearts! May the Eternal Spirit teach men to know aright this worst of ills, that they may flee from it to Him who alone can deliver.—*Ibid.*

(d) God stands between the right and the wrong, not looking pleasant on the one and equally pleasant on the other; not looking as the sun looks, with a benignant face on the evil and on the good; and not as man looks, with only a less benignant face on the evil. He stands with all the fervour of His infinite love and all the majesty of His unlimited power, approving good, and legislating for it on the one side; and disapproving evil, and abhorring it, and legislating it down to the dust, and beneath the dust, into infamy and eternal penalty, on the other side. And if there be one truth that speaks throughout the Bible like the voice of God, and resounds with all the grandeur of Divine intonation, it is the truth that God does not look with an equal eye upon the evil and the good, that He is a discriminator of character, a lover of that which is right, and a hater of that which is wrong.—*H. W. Beecher.*

AARON’S ROD AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 6-11.)

In this rod we have an illustration of—

I. The characteristics of the true Christian ministry.

1. *Life.* The rod of Aaron was quickened into life by God, while all the other rods remained mere dead wood. The true minister is alive spiritually. The life of supreme sympathy with God is his. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” “He that hath the Son of God hath the life.” “I live; yet not I,

but Christ liveth in me,” &c. The true minister is aflame with zeal for the glory of God, and the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of believers. Without this spiritual life man is utterly unfit for the Gospel ministry, even though he possessed every other qualification in great measure. (a)

2. *Beauty.* “The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms.” It was not only living, but beautiful. The true minister of Christ is adorned with the beauties of holiness. The Gospel which he

preaches to others he endeavours to illustrate in his own life; he translates his creed into his conduct. (*b*)

3. *Fruitfulness.* "The rod of Aaron . . . yielded almonds." This was not promised by the Lord (comp. ver. 5); it makes the vindication of the priesthood of Aaron more gloriously complete and conclusive. God is often better than His word: His performances never fall beneath His promises, but frequently transcend them. The true minister, like the rod of Aaron, is fruitful. His life and work are blessed by God to the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers in Christ, and the leading of the young into the faith and service of the Lord Jesus. He is useful in quickening holy thoughts and noble purposes, in training souls for spiritual service, and in leading them in such service. He is not only alive himself, his ministry is life-giving to others. (*c*)

II. The origin of the true Christian ministry.

The transformation of the rod of Aaron was the work of God. We have an extraordinary manifestation of the Divine power in giving life to this piece of dead wood, and causing it to put forth buds, blossoms, and fruit. It was unquestionably a supernatural achievement. The attributes of a true minister of Jesus Christ are gifts of God. *Spiritual life* is His gift. "Born of the Spirit." "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." *Spiritual beauty* is bestowed by God. It is "the beauty of the Lord

our God upon us." We are being transformed into the image of the Lord, "from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." "The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation." *Spiritual fruitfulness* is also the gift of God. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me," &c. (John xv. 4, 5.) "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" &c. (1 Cor. iii. 5-7.) Thus every true minister is a creation of God, and a gift of God to His Church.

III. The influence of the true Christian ministry.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept," &c. Thus this rod was to remain, and to continue to exercise a beneficent influence in repressing the disposition of the Israelites to murmur against the servants of the Lord. In like manner the true Christian ministry and its fruits are abiding things; and the manifestation of those fruits is calculated to silence murmurers and detractors. The holiest and most useful ministers may be assailed by detraction and even by cruel slander, as Aaron was; but his life and work will in due time silence the detractors and cover them with shame. The results of the life and work of the true minister will be the most effective vindication of his Divine call, and will "put to silence the ignorance of foolish and wicked men."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no one entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word indicating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the

wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession—namely, to convert life into truth—he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed, and planted, and talked, and bought, and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches; his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse that he had ever lived at all. Not a line did he draw out of real history. The true preacher can always be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the

fire of thought. But of the bad preacher, it could not be told from his sermon what age of the world he fell in; whether he had a father or a child; whether he was a freeholder or a pauper; whether he was a citizen, or any other fact in his history.—*R. W. Emerson.*

For the spiritual being, man, the only real life is in goodness. Can it not be proved so? If the fountain of all the life that flows through the fields of the universe is God, God is but another name for goodness. All the life that proceeds from Him, therefore, must be according to goodness or love, whether it beats in the bosom of a sinless child, or nerves the arm of a hero-saint; whether He rounds a planet, or tints a roseleaf; whether He balances the Pleiades in their spheres, or adjusts the microscopic machinery of an insect's wing; whether the affluents of His Spirit bears up the "seraph that adores and burns" before the throne, or lights the lamp of a feeble reason in these vessels of clay. Only so far as we share in the Father's goodness, then, are we partakers in His life. The measure of our being, as living souls, is precisely the measure of our excellence. In proportion as our actions are in harmony with Divine laws, and our familiar frame of feeling with God's will, we live. Herein is the Apostolic saying true, "To be spiritually-minded is life." Every rising-up of pure aspiration; every clinging to principle when you are tempted; every choice of abstract right above politic selfishness; every putting down of sensual passion by prayer; every preference of a truth which inherits a cross, over the lie that flatters you with a promise of prosperity—is a palpable motion of God's life within you. Indeed, this is the most intimate subjective knowledge you have of God. God, out of His express revelation, never speaks to us so audibly as when His Spirit prompts us to struggle, or braces us for a sacrifice. A generous impulse is the plainest pledge of His presence; a devout trust in Him, the mightiest demonstration of His Fatherhood.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which Heaven has given him, that will ac-

complish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives with all the force of his nature for the glory of God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) Beauty and love ought always to go together. In the highest moral realm, in the noblest moral traits, there should be the beautiful. Religion is itself beautiful. Its fragments, like shining particles of gold, are beautiful; but at every stage and step of its development toward moral perfection, it grows in the direction of beauty, and the highest conception of beauty is in character. Physical beauty is but the outward symbol and the lower representation of that which has its true existence only in spiritual elements. Religion is beautiful, because it is the service of the God of beauty. Its inward and characteristic experiences are full of beauty.—*H. W. Beecher.*

A true man after Christ will be the most noble and beautiful thing upon the earth—the freest, the most joyous, the most fruitful in all goodness. There is no picture that was ever painted, there is no statue that was ever carved, there was no work of art ever conceived of that was half so beautiful as is a living man, thoroughly developed on the pattern of Christ Jesus.—*Ibid.*

(c) Vitality is a test of any system of doctrine, as it is of any teacher's qualification. If you would find the value of any message, ask of it, Does it live? Do vital pulses leap through it? Does it reproduce its life? Does it help men to live? Does it leave them more alive or more dead than they were without it? Get an answer to these questions, and you will find whether the given ministry is of heaven, or of a private self-interest—whether it comes out of the all-quickening and all-comprehending God, or out of some dreamer's brain.

Nothing goes with much momentum, in the long trial, that does not carry life with it. Accumulate the learning of a thousand Melancthons; pile together the erudition of ancient schools and modern universities; what does it contribute to the real treasure of men, if it does not create life in them? The alcoves of libraries may be but the chambers of a mausoleum,—sepulchres of thought, instead of nurseries—and meeting houses, spiritual dormitories. Eloquence, burning as Peter the Hermit's, is wasted breath, unless the succeeding life of men shows that it reached the springs from which that life was fed. So in all communication of man with man. Nothing tells, nothing does execution, nothing survives very long, but what makes men feel and will and act,—nothing but the "word of life." Find me a book, a speech, a preacher, a gospel, that is not life-giving, and I know there is no true message, no inspiration, no revelation from God there.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

THE BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD.

(Verse 8.)

Notice—

I. The threefold significance of the rods which were laid to settle the question in dispute.

1. They were *historic*. The rods of the tribes were handed down from one generation to another, outliving many generations, and reminding the men of the present of the events of the past, as the mace of a city in England calls up to our minds events which have been connected with it in the past.

2. They were *representative*. They represented every man of the tribe as a mace represents every citizen, or as the heraldic sign of a noble house represents each member of the house, and the number upon the colour of each regiment represents each soldier in the regiment.

3. The rod was a sign of *personal authority* when borne by the man who alone was entitled to carry it—the head of the tribe. The macebearer derives no authority from bearing the sign of it, but in the hands of the chief magistrate it is an emblem of official power. The coronet in the hands, or even upon the head, of a commoner, means nothing; but it means rank upon the brow of him to whom it rightfully belongs.

II. Aaron's rod represented more remarkable historic events, and signified more authority, than the rods belonging to the heads of the other tribes.

It is generally supposed to have been the rod used by him and by Moses in the performance of the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness (comp. Exod. vii. 9, 19, &c.). It was, therefore, connected with a miracle in the past—it had been alive. And it signified an authority not derived from birth (Exod. vi. 16-20), but conferred by the special selection of God. The present miraculous manifestation may suggest—

1. *That the creation of life is the highest manifestation of Divine power.* Miracles of increase may to some extent find an analogy in the works of man when he works in co-operation with the established laws of nature. He sows a seed and reaps thirty-fold, and so on. But there is life in the seed to work upon. The giving of life to the dead can in no way be imitated by man. The character of this miracle, therefore, seems intended—

2. *To vindicate most forcibly the right of God to decide who should be, not only the head of the tribe of Levi, but the priestly head of the entire nation.* He who could thus dispense with all the seasons in the production of the flowers and fruit upon the rod, had a right to set aside the ordinary laws of primogeniture. God is not handcuffed by either His natural or social laws. He can break all laws except those of moral rectitude. To violate them is His blessed impossibility.

3. It may further suggest that *the choice of God would be justified in the after history of Israel.* The choice for special service begins with God. The selection of an earthly ambassador springs, not from himself, but from the king who sends him. So the Saviour and King of men said to His ambassadors, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." But His choice was justified by their "bringing forth fruit which remained" (John xv. 16). So the choice of Aaron's family was justified by the fruit which some members brought forth to bless the nation. Their faith and courage in entering Jordan, the zeal of Phinehas (Num. xxv. 7), &c., were typified in the budding and fruit-bearing rod which was their symbol.—From "*Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament.*"

THE BUDDED ROD, A TYPE OF CHRIST.

(Verse 8.)

Let us advance from the ancient record to the still-living Gospel of the fact. The Rod in many graphic tints shows Jesus. The very name is caught by raptured prophets—Isa. xi. 1; Zech. vi. 12, 13. Thus faith gleans lessons from the very title—Rod.

But the grand purport of the type is to reject all rivals. It sets Aaron alone upon the priestly seat. The parallel proclaims, that similarly Jesus is our only Priest. God calls—anoints—appoints—accepts, and ever hears Him; but Him alone. In His hands only do these functions live.

Next, the constant luxuriance has a clear voice. In nature's field, buds—blossoms—fruit, soon wither. Not so this Rod. Its verdure was for ever green; its fruit was ever ripe. Beside the Ark it was reserved in never-fading beauty. Here is the ever-blooming Priesthood of our Lord. Psal. cx. 4; Heb. vii. 24. . . . Because Christ ever lives, and ever loves, and ever prays, and ever works, therefore His kingdom swells. And so it shall be while the need remains. But when the last of the redeemed is safely gathered in, then heaven shall no more hear the interceding Priest. Then the one

sound from the vast throng shall be—Hallelujah.

Mark, moreover, that types of Jesus often comprehend the Church. It is so with these rods. The twelve at first seem all alike. They are all sapless twigs. But suddenly one puts forth loveliness; while the others still remain worthless and withered. Here is a picture of God's dealings with a sin-slain race. Since Adam's fall, all are born lifeless branches of a withered stock. When any child of man arises from the death of sin, and blooms in grace, God has arisen with Divine almightiness.

Believer, the Budded Rod gives another warning. It is a picture of luxuriance. Turn from it and look inward. Is your soul thus richly fertile? Instead of fruit, you often yield the thorn. John xv. 8. Whence is the fault? John xv. 4. Perhaps your neglectful soul departs from Christ. Meditate in God's law day and night, and you "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water," &c. Psal. i. 3.

But if the Budded Rod rebukes the scanty fruit in the new-born soul, what is its voice to unregenerate worldlings? Heb. vi. 8.—*Henry Law, D.D.*

THE CRY OF THE SUBDUED REBELS.

(Verses 12, 13.)

This last miraculous interposition, coming after the preceding judgments, awakened a salutary dread in the minds of the rebellious people, and led them to cry to Moses in great bitterness of spirit, "Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish," &c. This cry of theirs suggests the following observations:—

I. That sinners are prone to pass from one extreme of evil to the opposite one.

A little while ago they went to the extreme of presumption, now they are

in the extreme of despair. "See," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the folly and extravagance of this sinful people. At first, every person might come near to God, for all, they thought, were sufficiently holy, and every way qualified to minister in holy things. Now, no one, in their apprehension, can come near to the tabernacle without being consumed (ver. 13). In both cases they were wrong; some there were who might approach, others there were who might not. God had put the difference. His decision should

have been final with them; but sinners are ever running into extremes." "In the preceding events," says Scott, "they 'despised the chastening of the Lord;' and now they fainted when rebuked by Him." For another instance of their swift transition from one sinful extreme to another, comp. chap. xiv. 1-5, with 40-45.

II. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission, while the heart remains as rebellious as ever.

These Israelites were subdued, but they were not penitent. They do not recognise the fact that the thousands who perished, perished because of their sins; they do not confess their own sins. Their cry is that of a people who are painfully conscious that they have to do with a Being against whose judgments they cannot stand; but who evidently feel themselves injured by those judgments. Their cry was really a complaint against God. They felt themselves unable to cope with Him, and, therefore, yielded an unwilling submission to Him. Law and judgment may subdue rebellion, but they cannot enkindle loyalty; they may compel to submission, but they cannot convert to affection. It is only love that can do this.

III. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission while the mind entertains most erroneous moral opinions.

The people cried, "Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." They are still in

error. They have renounced the error, that all men might approach the tabernacle, but they have adopted the error that no one might approach unto it. There were those who might come near unto it; the priests might do so; it was their business to do so. And all might avail themselves of the offices of the priests; and were under solemn obligations to do so. But the judgments which they had experienced had not taught them this. Under the judgments of God men are not in a fit state for learning much concerning their relation to Him. And judgments are neither designed nor fitted to teach much, except man's utter inability to withstand God. Judgments are for correction rather than instruction. They have been used with effect for the destruction of the false and evil, but they are not fitted for building up the true and good. It was correction that Israel most needed when they were visited by these judgments. They persistently refused instruction. And, as is remarked by Keil and Del., "if this fear of death was no fruit of faith, it was fitted for all that to prevent any fresh outbreaks of rebellion on the part of the rejected generation."

IV. The most stout-hearted rebels against God must, sooner or later, submit to Him.

If they will not submit willingly, they will be compelled into submission. Comp. Job. ix. 3, 4; xl. 9; xxii. 21; Psa. i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 25. (a)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord to be vulnerable, yet where is the bow and where the arrow that could reach Him on His throne? What javelin shall pierce Jehovah's buckler? Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage against God, how shall they reach His throne? They cannot even shake His footstool. If all the angels of heaven should rebel against the Great King, and their squadrons should advance in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most High, He has but to will it and they would wither as autumn leaves, or consume as the fat upon the altar. Reserved in chains of darkness, the opponents of his power would for ever

become mementoes of His wrath. None can touch Him; He is the God that ever liveth. Let us who delight in the living God bow before Him, and humbly worship Him as the God in whom we live and move and have our being.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

As you stood some stormy day upon a sea-cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back to the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling

athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its course? Still more foolish and vain his thoughts, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purpose of God, saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us!" Break His bands asunder! How He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh!—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Prosperity is not found in opposing God. It is only by *falling in* with His arrangements and following His designs. A prosperous voyage is made by falling in with winds and currents, and not in opposing them; prosperous agriculture is carried on with coinciding with the favourable seasons of the year, and taking advantage of the dews, and rains, and sunbeams that God sends, and not in

opposing them; prosperity in regard to health is found in taking advantage of the means which God gives to secure it, and not in opposing them. And the sinner in his course has no more chance of success and prosperity, than a man would have who should make it a point or principle of life always to sail against tides, and currents, and head-winds; or he who should set at defiance all the laws of husbandry, and plant on a rock, or in the dead of winter; or he who should feed himself on poison rather than on nutritious food, and cultivate the nightshade rather than wheat. If a man desires prosperity, he *must* fall in with the arrangements of God in His providence and grace; and wisdom is seen in studying these arrangements, and in yielding to them.—*Albert Barnes, D.D.*

THE RUIN AND THE REMEDY.

(Verses 12 and 13.)

This was the language of desperation, remorse, and enmity to God. Israel had deeply transgressed and hardened themselves in transgression, and a just God had repeatedly visited them in wrath. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, had been swallowed up, and 250 men bearing impious fire had been consumed, and the surviving rebels said,—“Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” When further punished, crushed, but not humbled, again they murmur against God, as in the text.

Affecting description of the ravages of sin and death. Let us consider—

I. The devastations of death.

A true picture of all mankind—“Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish—we are consumed with dying.”

1. *Sad universal picture.* True in all ages, countries, climes. Death is universal and unavoidable: no exemption, old and young, strong and weak, rich and poor, tyrant and oppressor, the wise man and the fool—all die. Same phenomena, sickness, pain, suffering, decay—in all lands. (Job xiv. 1, 2, &c.; Isa. xxxviii. 12; xl. 6-8.) How many gone from among us, and we are hasting after them, and soon shall be with them.

2. *And whither are they gone?* Ask the philosopher, the sceptic, the Deist—

they cannot tell you—they have no comfort for you: perhaps your departed ones are annihilated, or they wander in other bodies, or are absorbed in Deity! Ah! man without God's Word knows nothing of the future.

They are in the separate state—they have begun to be eternally happy or miserable—eternal woes or eternal bliss—a second death—oh! terrible: the first death is sad, but what is the second? “Where their worm never dies,” &c.

II. The cause of these widespread desolations of death.

Again ask the philosopher, the philanthropist, the disbeliever in the Scripture account of it—Why all this misery, pain, death? How do you reconcile it with a God of benevolence? They are silent. Our answer is one word—“*Sin*”—“our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa. lxiv. 6.)

1. *This world is a penal state.* A fact much overlooked. It so far resembles the future world of suffering, with this difference—*this* world is both penal and probationary, *that* is penal only. *But this world is a state of punishment*—we are born into it under the curse and wrath of God—and every pain, sorrow, grief—bodily, mental, spiritual—is a

punishment for original sin, or the effect of actual sin. "We die, we perish, we all perish," because we sin, we all sin. Universal death proves universal sin; because death is the penalty of sin. (Rom. v. 12.) Almost all men hasten death and shorten their lives by sin. It peoples gaols and madhouses, and feeds the tomb. (Rom. vi. 23.) The mortal wound—"sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) "Brings forth death." (James i. 15.)

2. *Alas, this, too, peoples hell!* "The wicked turned into hell." (Psa. ix. 17; Matt. xxiii. 33; 2 Pet. ii. 4.) First death only dark portal to the second.

III. The remedy for this widespread desolation of sin and death.

It was that very "tabernacle" which these frightened, but desperate sinners dreaded. There only was their refuge; there the mercy-seat; there the propitiation—the sacrificing priest, the altar, and a sin-forgiving God above it. Yet they said, "Whosoever cometh near the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." And perhaps they were right—for as of the Gospel it typified, so the tabernacle was a means of life or death, according as it was approached—"of life unto life, or of death unto death." (2 Cor. ii. 16.) But there was no other refuge, no other salvation.

Now Christ is our true tabernacle. (Heb. viii. 2.) "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) "He hath abolished death." (2 Tim. i. 10.) He has offered one sacrifice for sins. (Heb. x. 12.) He is our "Apostle and High Priest;" our living "Advocate with the Father." (1 John ii. 1.)

Here is the universal remedy—Christ

Jesus the Lord—He is "the tree, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 2.) "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "He healeth broken hearts"—"wipes tears from sorrowing faces"—lights up the grave with joy—makes men "long to depart" that they may "be with Him." By faith in Him His people rejoice in tribulation—count temptations "all joy"—heavy burdens are lightened, long troubles shortened and sweetened: and they have "a hope full of immortality." Well has He said, "Oh death, I will be thy plagues!" (Hos. xiii. 14.)

With what view do you regard Almighty God?—as terrible, revengeful, cruel, relentless? Do you read these attributes in the present miseries of the world? Do the promised miseries of another world confirm them? Does the language of the text suit you? Then it is because *you do not know God*. Conscious guilt and dread of punishment we have in common with devils who "believe and tremble;" but only repent, humble your proud hearts, lay low that unbelieving spirit, and seek mercy through the Son of His love, and then you "shall see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Some men will "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" but if you "flee from the wrath to come," and lay hold on the all-sufficient Saviour, you shall taste the sweetness of His mercy.

Let all who know Him, and love Him, cleave unto Him in His tabernacle, His mercy-seat; they shall find His name "Love," and shall rejoice before Him.—*F. Close, D.D.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people recorded at the close of the preceding chapter. And after the confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his family, these Divine directions as to the duties

and emoluments of the Priests and Levites come in very appropriately. The greater part of these directions were addressed by the Lord directly to Aaron (vers. 1-24). But the regulations as to the tithes to be paid by the Levites

to the Priests were addressed to Moses, as the head of all Israel (vers. 25-32).

Verse 1. *The iniquity of the sanctuary.* "i.e., the guilt of the offences which an erring people would be continually committing against the majesty of God, when brought into contact, through the ordinances, with the manifestations of His presence. Cf. Exodus xxviii. 38 ; also viii. 19."—*Speaker's Comm.*

The iniquity of your priesthood. "As the priests themselves were but men, they could no more than others abide it, if God were extreme to mark what was done amiss. An atonement was consequently ordained for them (Lev. xvi.); and they were strengthened to bear the iniquity of their own unintentional offences, by being entrusted with the ceremonial means of taking it away. The word 'bear' has, in the Old Testament, this double sense of 'enduring' and 'removing;' but in the person of Christ, who atoned by His own endurance, the two are in effect one."—*Ibid.*

And thy father's house with thee. "The father's house of Aaron, i.e., the Levitical family of Kohath, was also to join in bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, because the oversight of the holy vessels of the sanctuary devolved upon it (chap. iv. 4, sq.)."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 2. *Thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi . . . may be joined unto thee.* "There is a fine paronomasia, or play upon words, in the original. *Levi* comes from the root *lavah*, to join to, couple, associate: hence Moses says, the *Levites*, *yillavu*, shall be joined or associated with the priests; they shall conjointly perform the whole of the sacred office, but the priests shall be principal, the Levites only their associates."—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 4. *A stranger, i.e., everyone who was neither a priest nor a Levite.* Comp. chap. i. 53 ; iii. 7.

Verse 5. *Ye shall keep, &c. Ye, viz., Aaron and his sons.*

Verse 7. *I have given your priest's office, &c.* "This office, which brought them into the closest fellowship with the Lord, was a favour accorded to

them by the grace of God. This is expressed in the words, 'as a service of gift (a service with which I present you) I give you the priesthood.'"—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 8. *By reason of the anointing.* Keil and Del. et al. translate, "for a portion."

Verse 10. *In the most holy place, i.e., "in the court of the tabernacle (see Lev. vi. 9, 19 ; vii. 6), which is called 'most holy' here, to lay a stronger emphasis upon the precept."*—*Keil and Del.*

Every male. Only the males of the priestly families could eat of the things mentioned in ver. 9.

Verse 11. *To thy sons and to thy daughters.* Both the males and females of the priestly families, provided they were legally clean, might eat of the things mentioned in this verse.

Verse 15. *Surely redeem . . . redeem.* "A stronger expression is intentionally used in reference to the redemption of the first-born of man than in reference to that of unclean beasts. For the rule as to the former admitted of no exception: the owner of the latter, if unwilling to redeem, might destroy the beasts (Exod. xiii. 13 ; xxxiv. 20). Usually, of course, he would redeem them, but in the case of a diseased or maimed animal he might well be excused from making a payment for that which, if redeemed, would be worthless. As to the mode of redemption of unclean beasts, it had been originally enjoined that the firstling of an ass should be redeemed with a lamb. But the owner of the beast might not be always able to provide a lamb, especially in the wilderness, and the liability was accordingly commuted (Lev. xxvii. 27). Into all the details of this the present ordinances do not enter. Their object is not so much to prescribe accurately to the people what should be paid, as to assign to the priests their various revenues."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *A covenant of salt.* "That is, an incorruptible everlasting covenant. As salt was added to different kinds of viands, not only to give them

a relish, but to preserve them from putrefaction and decay, it became the emblem of *incorruptibility* and *permanence*. Hence, a *covenant of salt* signified an *everlasting covenant*. Among the Asiatics, eating together was considered a bond of perpetual friendship; and as *salt* was a common article in all their repasts, it may be in reference to this circumstance that a perpetual covenant is termed a *covenant of salt*; because the parties ate together of the sacrifice offered on the occasion, and the whole transaction was considered as a league of endless friendship. See Lev. ii. 13."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 20. Comp. Deut. x. 9; xviii. 1, 2; Josh. xiii. 33. "No tract of land was peculiarly assigned to them, as were to the other tribes, as fields nor vineyards; they had fields appointed them, and they had houses and cities devoted to the Lord which fell to them, and others they had by gift or legacy, or by purchase, as had Jeremiah, the priest, and Barnabas, the Levite, Jer. xxxii. 9; and Acts iv. 36, 37; but they

had no share in the distribution of the land of Canaan at the time of the division of it among the tribes; no, not even in the spoil of the cities of the land of Canaan when they were conquered."—*Evang. Synopsis.*

Verse 21. Comp. Lev. xxvii. 31-33; Neh. x. 37; xii. 44.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. chap. i. 53 and viii. 19.

Verse 26. The Levites are here commanded to give to the priests, as an offering to the Lord, a tithe of the tithes which they received.

Verse 27. *Shall be reckoned, &c.* "That is, it should be as acceptable to God as if they had fields and vineyards, threshing-floors and wine-presses, of their own, from whence corn and wine were taken."—*Dr. Gill.*

Verse 29. *Of all the best thereof.* Heb. as in margin, "Of all the fat."

Verse 32. *Neither shall ye pollute, &c.* "Rather, 'And by not polluting the holy things of the children of Israel, ye shall not die.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

A GRAVE PERIL AND A GRACIOUS PRECAUTION.

(Verses 1-7.)

Two preliminary points :

First : *Here is the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people.* The inquiry concerning the approach to the tabernacle of the Lord, with which the preceding chapter closes, receives a clear response in the paragraph now before us. Man may draw near to God, but it must be in the way which He has appointed. Mic. vi. 6-8; John xiv. 6.

Second : *Here is a solemn reminder to Aaron that his great honours involved great responsibilities.* The Lord had abundantly vindicated his priesthood, and now He reminds him of the serious responsibilities of his charge. "Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear," &c. (ver. 1). "And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary," &c. (ver. 5). Wherefore let them "not be high-minded, but fear." (See pp. 32, 33.) (a)

Let us now consider—

I. The grave peril referred to.

There was danger that the wrath of God might be again kindled against them by reason of—

1. *Sin in relation to consecrated places and things.* No one was to come nigh unto these except upon such occasions as were permitted by God, e.g., when bringing their sacrifices to the priests, &c. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Korah and his company had sinned in this way, and they were consumed by "fire from the Lord." Aaron and his sons, with the Levites as assistants, must bear the responsibility of the charge of the sacred places and things. As with the Israelites there was danger of sin by unwarranted approach to the tabernacle; so our best services are imper-

fect; even our worship is marred by wandering thoughts and lukewarm affections; our religious exercises need the merits of the gracious Saviour. (b)

2. *Sin in consecrated persons.* "The Lord said unto Aaron, . . . Thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver. 1). The holiest of men in the holiest office is, in the present state, exposed to temptation, and liable to sin, and stands constantly in need of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (c)

Sin, whether in priests or in people, is a perilous thing; it issues in death (James i. 15); it kindles the wrath of God. "Sin and punishment," says Trapp, "come under one name, as being tied together with chains of adamant: where the one dines the other will sup; where the one is in the saddle, the other will be upon the crupper. *Nemo crimen gerit in pectore qui non idem Nemesin in tergo.* Sin doth as naturally draw and suck judgments to it, as the loadstone doth iron, or turpentine fire."

II. The gracious precaution against this peril.

By appointing the priests and Levites to the charge of the consecrated places and things; by appointing to them means of atonement for sin (Lev. xvi.); and by solemnly warning the people against intruding into sacred places or intermeddling with sacred duties, the Lord endeavours to guard them against the perils to which they were exposed. But there are several particulars which call for notice:—

1. *The Divine distribution of duty.* To the priests and the Levites respectively certain duties were allotted (comp. chaps. iii. and iv., and see pp. 48, 49, 56, 57).

2. *The Divine recognition of differences of rank amongst men.* The Levites, though brethren to the priests, were to serve them. They shall "be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee." Differences of rank are inevitable amongst men. (See pp. 12, 13.) The Church of Christ is no exception

in this. (See p. 48.) As the Levites were to serve under Aaron, so Christians work under Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest. (d)

3. *In the differences of rank the common brotherhood of all must not be lost sight of.* Though servants to the priests, the Levites were their brethren. "Thy brethren" (ver. 2); "your brethren the Levites" (ver. 6). In the Christian Church differences of rank do not invalidate the brotherhood of all. The elders of the Church are not to be "lords over God's heritage." "One is your master, Christ; and all ye are brethren." Even "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (e)

4. *Men of every rank are called to service.* The priests must serve; so also must the Levites; and those who belonged to neither of these orders were called to serve in other departments of the national life. From the highest to the lowest no one was exempted from this obligation. (See pp. 13, 56, 57.)

5. *Each must faithfully fulfil his own service, and abstain from intrusion into the province of others.* The Levites were not to interfere with priestly duties: "They shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die." They who were neither priests nor Levites were to abstain from all the sacred functions connected with the tabernacle. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." No one must intermeddle with duties which belonged not to him. An excellent rule for all times and places.

6. *The faithful discharge of appointed duty promotes the safety of the entire people.* "Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel." The welfare of the whole community is affected beneficially or injuriously by the conduct of each member of it. The faithfulness of even the feeblest and most obscure member contributes to the security and prosperity of the entire commonwealth. (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The greater the trust is of work and power that is committed to us the greater is our danger of contracting guilt, by falsifying and b-treating that trust. This is a good reason why we should neither be envious at others' honours nor ambitious ourselves of high places, because great dignity exposes us to great iniquity. Those that are entrusted with the charge of the sanctuary will have a great deal to answer for. Who would have the care of souls who considers the account that must be given of that care?—*Matthew Henry.*

(b) The temple itself is full of vacant worship. It resounds with rash vows and babbling voices. It is the house of God; but man has made it a nest of triflers, a fair of vanity, a den of thieves. Some come to it, as reckless and irreverent as if they were stepping into a neighbour's house. Some come to it, and feel as if they had laid the most High under obligation, because they bring a sheaf of corn or a pair of pigeons; whilst they never listen to God's Word, nor strive after that obedience which is better than sacrifice. Some come, and rattle over empty forms of devotion, as if they would be heard because of their much speaking. And some, in a fit of fervour, utter vows which they forget to pay; and, when reminded of their promise by the "angel" of the church, they protest that there must be some mistake: they repudiate the vow, and say it was an error.—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

(c) As a man who in the morning washeth his hands, and goes abroad about his business and affairs in the world, though he doth not puddle in the mire, or rake among dunghills, yet when he returns home again to dinner, or at night, if he wash, he finds that he hath contracted some uncleanness and that his hands are foul: we cannot converse in an unclean and dirty world with our bodies, but some uncleanness will fasten upon them. So it is with the soul; the souls of the best, of the purest, of the holiest, though they do not rake in the dunghill, and wallow in the mire of sin basely and filthily, yet they do from day to day, yea, from moment to moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. And in this sense it is that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not." Every man hath a "fountain of uncleanness" in him; and there will be ever some sin, some filthiness bubbling and boiling up, if not flowing forth.—*Caryl.*

(d) The Levites were to serve under Aaron, the head of the priestly house. This teaches us a fine lesson, and one much needed by Christians at the present moment. We all want to bear in mind that service, to be intelligent and acceptable, must be rendered in subjection to priestly authority and guidance. The whole tribe of workers were associated with and subject to the high priest. All was under his immediate control and guidance. So must it be now in reference to all God's workers. All Christian service must be rendered in fellowship with our Great High Priest, and in holy subjection

to His authority. It is of no value otherwise. There may be a great deal of work done, there may be a great deal of activity; but if Christ be not the immediate object before the heart, if His guidance and authority be not fully owned, the work must go for nothing. But, on the other hand, the smallest act of service, the meanest work done under the eye of Christ, done with direct reference to Him, has its value in God's estimation, and shall most assuredly receive its due reward. This is truly encouraging, and consolatory to the heart of every earnest worker. The Levites had to work under Aaron. Christians have to work under Christ. We are responsible to Him.—*Anon.*

(e) You recognise in every nation, in every tribe, your fellow men, your brethren. Go to Egypt, and stand among the Sphinxes, the Pyramids, the old and wondrous temples, and you are a stranger in a strange land, and it seems scarcely less than a ghastly dream. Go farther East, behold the ruined architecture, revive the manners and customs of the Syrian and Babylonian empires, and you seem still among a strange people. If they should rise and speak to you, their tongues would be as strange to you as yours would be to them. But let a maiden speak her love, and instantly you know that voice. The works that their hands wrought are wondrous. The affections that throb in their hearts are familiar. The things that they lived for outwardly—see how widely you are separated from these. How different are their laws, their institutions, and their methods of commerce from ours! How strange to us are their political economy and their ecclesiastical system! Touch that which man fashioned and formed, and man is disjointed, and split apart by rivers, and mountains, and times, and ages; but touch the human heart, and let that speak, and all men rise up and say, "That voice is my voice." Reach but the feeling of love, and every human being says, "It is my brother; it is my sister." Strike those cords that bring out the experience of grief, and every man wails with the hoary wailers of antiquity. Man is not a unit by virtue of the fruits of his intellect and the works of his hand, but by virtue of those eternal identities of sentiment and affection which are common to all men in all nations and ages.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) No man has a right to say he can do nothing for the benefit of mankind, who are less benefited by ambitious projects than by the sober fulfilment of each man's proper duties. By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor. The results of "patient continuance in well-doing" are never to be measured by the weakness of the instrument, but by the omnipotence of Him who blesseth the sincere efforts of obedient faith alike in the prince and in the cottager.—*H. Thompson.*

THE FIDELITY OF ONE, THE SAFETY OF MANY.

(Verse 5.)

This applies—

I. To ministers of the Gospel, who are—

1. To preach the whole truth.
2. To guard the ordinances of religion.
3. To urge the performance of duty, that the people of their charge may be saved from sin and wrath.

II. To civil rulers,

Who are to make and enforce laws to maintain and increase the tone of public morality.

III. To heads of families,

Who, by example and precept, should seek to form good characters and correct evil habits in their children and servants.

An illustration of fidelity.—The fidelity of the keepers of the lighthouse once

on Minet's Ledge, near Boston, may well be imitated. In the terrible April gale of 1851, this beautiful structure was destroyed. Two men were in it at the time; and a vast multitude were gathered upon the shore, waiting, in anxious distress, for the expected catastrophe. Every hour, however, the bell tolled the time, and ever the light pierced the dark raging storm, and bid the sailor beware. No howling blast could silence the one, or rising wave extinguish the other. At last, one giant wave, mightier than the rest, rose up and threw its arms around the tower, and laid it low in the waves. Then alone was the bell silent; then alone did the light cease to shine.—*J. M. Reid.*—*Biblical Museum.*

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 8-32.)

The main subject of this portion of the history has already engaged our attention (see pp. 84-86); but there are additional matters brought before us here which demand notice.

The Redemption of the Firstborn (vers. 15, 16) has also been already noticed by us (see pp. 59, 60).

"These regulations concerning the revenues of the priests and Levites were in perfect accordance with the true idea of the Israelitish Kingdom of God. Whereas in heathen states, where there was an hereditary priestly caste, that caste was generally a rich one, and held a firm possession in the soil (in Egypt, for example; see at Gen. xlvii. 22), the Levites received no hereditary landed property in the land of Israel, but only towns to dwell in among the other tribes, with pasturage for their cattle (chap. xxxv.), because Jehovah, the

God of Israel, would be their inheritance. In this way their earthly existence was based upon the spiritual ground and soil of faith, in accordance with the calling assigned them, to be the guardians and promoters of the commandments, statutes, and rights of Jehovah; and their authority and influence among the people were bound up with their unreserved surrender of themselves to the Lord, and their firm reliance upon the possession of their God. Now, whilst this position was to be a constant incitement to the Levites to surrender themselves entirely to the Lord and His service, it was also to become to the whole nation a constant admonition, inasmuch as it was a prerogative conferred upon them by the Lord, to seek the highest of all good in the possession of the Lord, as its portion and inheritance."—*Keil and Del.*

The following observations are suggested—

I. That the maintenance of the Christian ministry devolves upon the Christian Church.

This nation of Israelites was separated unto the Lord, and is thus an illustration of the Church. God ordained that the priests and Levites should be supported by the nation; the Christian ministry should be supported by the Christian Church.

1. *This is righteous.* The priests and Levites were required to renounce the paths of worldly ambition and profit; they had no share in the inheritance of the children of Israel (vers. 20, 24); they were to devote themselves unreservedly to the promotion of the religious interests of the people. Inasmuch as they gave their time, their strength, &c., to serve the people, the people could not neglect to provide for them without dishonesty. The Christian minister has a right to a liberal maintenance from the church which he serves. What the Lord said to the Levites might be said to ministers to day respecting the provision made for them, "It is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 31). (a)

2. *This is advantageous.* It promotes the prosperity of the Church. (See pp. 85, 86.)

3. *This is scriptural.* Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7-14; Gal. vi. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

II. That Christian ministers of every grade who are devoted to the service of the Church have a right to support from the Church.

God gives directions for the worthy support of the high priest, the priests, and their servants, the Levites, also. The claims of the poor, hard-working curate upon the Church for a respectable maintenance are, in the sight of God, as binding as those of the wealthy and lordly bishop. The claims of many of the most faithful and useful ministers, who are working in inconspicuous spheres, are most sadly and sinfully overlooked by the Christian Church. (b)

III. That the Christian ministry

should be supported liberally by the Church.

"The revenue which the Lord assigned to the Levites and priests, as His servants, consisting of the tenths and firstfruits, as well as certain portions of the different sacrificial gifts that were offered to Him, appears to have been a very considerable one, especially if we adopt the computation of J. D. Michaelis (*Mos. Recht.* i. § 52) with reference to the tithes. 'A tribe,' he says, 'which had only 22,000 males in it (23,000 afterwards), and therefore could hardly have numbered more than 12,000 grown up men, received the tithes of 600,000 Israelites; consequently one single Levite, without the slightest necessity for sowing, and without any of the expenses of agriculture, reaped or received from the produce of the flocks and herds as much as five of the other Israelites.' But this leaves out of sight the fact that tithes are never paid so exactly as this, and that no doubt there was as little conscientiousness in the matter then as there is at the present day, when those who are entitled to receive a tenth often receive even less than a twentieth. Moreover, the revenue of the tribe which the Lord had chosen as His own peculiar possession, was not intended to be a miserable and beggarly one; but it was hardly equal, at any time, to the revenues which the priestly castes of other nations derived from their endowments."—*Keil and Del.* It is deplorable that the Christian Church, with its richer spiritual heritage, should fall so far below the Jewish Church in this respect.

IV. That all the members of the Church should contribute to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every one who brought a sacrifice contributed a portion of the same to the priests, and those who had children or cattle contributed the firstborn, and those who cultivated the soil presented the choicest of their productions and the firstfruits, and to the Levites all the tithes were given. So that, in one way or another, all contributed to the

support of the priests and Levites. And surely the principle is just that all who receive the services of the Christian ministry should contribute to its support. (c)

V. That all should contribute proportionally to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every Israelite contributed a tenth of his possessions to the cause of God. The rule for the Christian should be, "Every man according to his ability." "As God hath prospered him." "Freely ye have received, freely give." (d)

VI. That out of their maintenance Christian ministers should offer a portion to the Lord. (Verses 25-29.)

"The Levites had to give up the tenth of all the tithes they received to the priests; and the priests were to offer to Jehovah upon the altar a portion of the firstfruits, heave-offerings, and wave-offerings that were assigned to them. Consequently, as the whole nation was to make a practical acknow-

ledgment, in the presentation of the tithe and firstfruits, that it had received its hereditary property as a fief from the Lord its God, so the Levites, by their payment of the tenth to the priests, and the priests, by presenting a portion of their revenues upon the altar, were to make a practical confession that they had received all their revenues from the Lord their God, and owed Him praise and adoration in return (see *Bahr, Symbolik*, ii. pp. 43 sqq.).—*Keil and Del.* And the Christian minister, being liberally maintained by the Church, should be an example of liberality, honouring God and doing good to men with his temporal goods.

Application :—

1. Let the Church recognise and do its duty in relation to the ministry; and do it as unto the Lord, and then it will become a privilege.

2. Let ministers be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their duties, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You listen to a minister suspiciously because he is paid for preaching. Very good. I only insist upon your being consistent throughout; then what will happen? When you are drowning, you will ask the life-boat men whether they are paid for their services, and on being told that they live by their occupation, you will nobly perish in the deep. When your house is in flames, you will demand, notwithstanding the stifling smoke and cracking timbers, whether the fire-escape men are paid for their work, and on learning that they have a pound a week, you will embrace the flames with a martyr's rapture. Of course you will do so. But let me tell you that men who try to save life never can be paid! A man may pay for his coat, but he can never pay for the services which, by the blessing of God, redeem and sanctify his nature.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) All in the ministry, whatsoever their gifts be, are to be accepted; yea, though their gifts oftentimes be small and slender. True it is, they must all have some gifts to fit them to teach the people, but howsoever they be inferior to many others, yet for their office sake they must be regarded. I do not say, the people should depend upon them that are utterly ignorant and unlearned, but if meanly gifted in comparison of others, the people must not forsake them, neither wander from one Levite to another. Mark, therefore, that

ministers endued with a small, and yet a competent measure of gifts, may, notwithstanding, do unto God good service in the Church, and gain glory to His Name. He putteth His rich treasures in vessels, not of silver and gold, but of earth. Among the Apostles, it is to be thought that some had greater gifts than others; some were "the sons of thunder," and some "laboured more abundantly than others," no doubt according to the gifts they had received, yet all profitable to the Church. There is "a difference of gifts by the same Spirit," nevertheless all "given to profit withal" (1 Cor. xii. 4-7). And Paul saith, he spake with tongues more than others (1 Cor. xiv. 18). Experience teacheth this among ourselves, that many of mean gifts and little human learning, yet have been profitable teachers, and powerful instruments of much good in the Church of God, and gaining many to Him.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) As the great principle of love to Christ will not allow the more opulent to give scantily, so neither will it permit the poorest to come before Him empty. It was one of the Divine enactments even of the legal dispensation—*None shall come before Me empty.* But that which was matter of law with the Israelites, the Christian will seize as a golden opportunity for evincing his love to Christ; and will bring, though it be only a grain of incense for an offering, or a leaf for that wreath of

praise and honour which the Church delights to lay at the feet of Christ. Whatever Scripture example others may profess to copy, he will select the example of the benevolent widow; and, while others content themselves with only admiring it, he will often reflect on its imitableness. Nor will the language of the Apostle be ever heard by him but as an address to himself,—“Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” “These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to those that are with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Agreeably with these sentiments, the man who, at one time, imagined that his poverty quite exempted him from the obligations of charity, and only rendered him an *object* of it, is no sooner made the partaker of grace, than he feels himself impelled to place some offering on the altar of Christian benevolence; and, with the ready eye and hand of affection, he soon detects, for this end, some small superfluity which can be retrenched, or some leisure time which can be profitably employed. And when his mite-like offerings, the fruit of hard self-denial, or of the sweat of his brow, is presented, nothing could inflict on his grateful heart a deeper wound than to see that offering rejected on the ground of its comparative insignificance, or of his supposed inability to give it. It is the offering of a sinner's gratitude to a Saviour's love, and heaven rejoices over the oblation.—*John Harris, D.D.*

(d) It is observable that Abraham and Jacob, on particular occasions, voluntarily

devoted to God—what afterwards became a Divine law for the Jewish nation—a *tenth* of their property. Without implying that their example has any obligation on us, we may venture to say that *one tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion for charity, for those who, with so doing, are able to support themselves and families. For the more opulent, and especially for those who have no families, a larger proportion would be equally easy. For some, one half would be too little; while, for others, a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care. Indeed, of many among the poor it may be said, that if they give *anything* they give their *share*, they *cast in more than all their brethren*.

But in determining the proportion to be made sacred to God, the Christian would surely rather exceed than fall short of the exact amount. *With whom is he stipulating? For whom is he preparing the offering?* Well may the recollection put every covetous thought to instant flight tingling his cheek with shame at the bare possibility of ingratitude; and impelling him to lay his all at the feet of Christ. Only let him think of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved him, only let him pass by the cross on his way to the altar of oblation, and his richest offering will appear totally unworthy of Divine acceptance. When Christ is the object to be honoured, the affection of the pardoned penitent cannot stop to calculate the value of its alabaster box of precious ointment—that is an act to which a Judas only can stoop—its chief and sole regret is that the unction has not a richer perfume and a higher value.—*Ibid.*

THE SUPREME CLAIMS OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

“All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them they shall offer unto the Lord.”

God claims that the first and the best of man's possessions shall be devoted unto Him.

I. Let us illustrate this claim.

1. *It applies to ourselves.* (1) He claims the best of our *persons*. He asks for our supreme love. “My son give Me thine heart.” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” &c. (2) He claims the best of our *life*. Youth, with its freshness and enthusiasm and hope, is His. “They that seek Me early, shall find Me.”

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Manhood, with its maturity and strength and firmness and wisdom, is His. He summons men to His service,—“Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.” He condescends by His Apostle to entreat men to comply with His demands. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies,” &c. He will not be satisfied with the dregs of life, or with the fragments of life; He demands its first, and best, and all.

2. *It applies to our possessions.* (1) Our *time* He claims: not the remnant, after the claims of business and pleasure have all been met. He will be served in

all. His demand must be met first, or it is slighted. (2) Our *treasures* also He claims. Man of wealth! God lays His hand upon thy property, and calls it His own. Man of genius! God calls thee to lay thine eloquence and logic, thy poetry and philosophy, upon His altar. Consecrate thy gifts to Him. Even the friend or relative who is more dear than life to us, He asserts His claim upon, and we are bound to submit. He demanded the first-born of Israel as peculiarly His; and He may claim that our first-born, or our Benjamin, shall be entirely surrendered to His service here, or He may call them away to serve Him in higher spheres. The choicest of our possessions and of ourselves; all that we have and all that we are, He asserts His right to.

II. Let us enforce this claim.

We may do this on the following grounds:

1. *He has given to us whatever of good we possess.* "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." &c. "What hast thou that thou didst not

receive?" "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." He gives to us not absolutely, but as to stewards, &c. (a)

2. *He gave His Best to us.* How dear is His Son to Him! "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet He gave Him to us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. And He gave Him to humiliation and want, to suffering and sorrow, to shame and death. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Having given His Best so freely to us—and *such a Best!* He surely has an indisputable right to our best. (b)

3. *If we have complied with His great demand, and given ourselves to Him, we shall not hesitate to give Him the best of our possessions.* If we have given our hearts fully to Him, we shall not keep back anything which He requires of us. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Think of the right which He has in all you possess. There is a sense in which no man can be said to possess an exclusive and irresponsible right in property, even in relation to his fellow-creatures. The land which he calls *his own*, is still guarded and watched over by a public law which would hold him responsible for its destruction. But if man thus claims a common interest in the most independent description of property, how much more does God hold a right in your possessions? He created them at first; and hence He has an original and supreme property in them. The world is His, and the fulness thereof. He continues them in existence every moment; and is thus every moment asserting afresh His original rights and establishing a new title to dominion over them. You have not brought into existence a single mite; all that you have done is to collect together what He had made ready to your hands. And whence did you derive the skill and ability to do this? "Thou must remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." Hence He cautions you against the sin of "saying in your heart, my power, and the might of mine own hand, hath gotten me this wealth," lest you should fall into the consequent sin of forgetting that He is still the supreme Proprietor of all you possess. And

hence too He solemnly reminds you that your enjoyments are His *gifts*, only in the sense that you had nothing wherewith to purchase them, and not in the sense that He has given away His right in them: that they are deposited with you as His steward, not alienated from Him and vested in you as their master; that both they and you are His to do with as seemeth good in His sight.

The moment you lose sight, therefore, of His absolute right to all you possess, you are embezzling your Lord's property, and realizing the character of the unjust steward. You are provoking God to resume His own, and to transfer it to more faithful hands. . . . Then hasten to His throne and acknowledge His right. Take all that you have into His presence, and dedicate it afresh to His service. Inscribe His blessed name on all your possessions.—*John Harris, D.D.*

(b) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "Herein is love!" The universe is crowded with proofs of His beneficence; but here is a proof which outweighs them all. How much He loved us we can never compute; we have no line with which to fathom, no standard with which to compare it, but He so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "Herein is love!" "Thanks

be unto God for His unspeakable gift." . . .

Nor is this all: He invites you to advance from the altar of sacrifice to the holiest of all within the veil;—in other words, He hath given you Christ that He may give you Himself. It was by wandering from Him that man first became selfish and unhappy. It was by losing Him that man was reduced to the necessity of looking for happiness in the creature. And, because no single kind of created good can satisfy the soul, man sought to accumulate all kinds, to monopolize every thing—he became selfish. But the blessed God, by offering to bring you back again to Himself, is offering to make you independent of all inferior things; to put you in possession of a good which shall enable you to look down with disdain on those things about which others are selfish; to lead you to an *infinite* good; a good, therefore, about which you need not be selfish, for were all the universe to share and enjoy it with you, it would still be an unexhausted infinite fulness of happiness.

Now let the most miserly individual come suddenly into the possession of great wealth, he would be conscious, at least for a short time, of kind and generous emotions. What then should be your emotions at discovering that, through Christ, you have found a God? And think, *what a God He is!* Enumerate His perfections; call up in your mind His exalted attributes; recollect some of the displays of His glory, the splendours of His throne, the amplitude of His dominions, the angelic orders of His kingdom, the richness of His gifts, the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for His people—and when your mind is filled, repeat to yourself the wondrous truth, "This God is my God for ever and ever." And, then, think what it is to have Him *for your God*: it is to have a real, participating, eternal interest in all that He is; to have Him for your "all in all"; to be "filled with all the fulness of God." Christian, are you aware of your wealth? have you yet awoke to a conscious possession of your infinite wealth? Do you not feel that you could give away the world itself as a trifle, while you stand and gaze at these infinite riches? All who have truly and fully returned to God have felt thus. They gazed on this glory and the world was eclipsed; they thought of it, and their heart became too large for earth; they reached after it, and the world fell from their hands, from their hearts. Having found the true source of happiness, they would fain have had all mankind to come and share it with them. And when He commanded them

to call the world to come to Him and be happy, they gave away everything, even life itself, in the noble employ, and from love to His name.—*Ibid.*

(c) It is related in Roman history, that when the people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ, though not so detailed and specific as this formula, is equally comprehensive. And do you not account these your best moments when you feel constrained to lament that your surrender comprehends no more? Can you recall to mind the way in which He has redeemed you, the misery from which He has snatched you, and the blessedness to which He is conducting you, without feeling that He has bought you a thousand times over? that you are His by the tenderest, weightiest obligations? And when you feel thus, how utterly impossible would it be for you at such a moment to stipulate for an exception in favour of your property!—to harbour a mental reservation in favour of *that!*

Can you think of the blessedness attending the act itself of dedication to God,—that you are wedding yourself to infinite riches, uniting yourself to infinite beauty, allying yourself to infinite excellence; giving yourself to God, and receiving God in return, so that henceforth all His infinite resources, His providence, His Son, His Spirit, His heaven, He Himself, all become yours, to the utmost degree in which you can enjoy them,—can you think of this without often repeating the act? without feeling that had you all the excellencies of a myriad of angels, His love would deserve the eternal devotion of the whole? Realize to your own mind the nature of Christian dedication, and the claims of Him who calls for it, and so far from giving penuriously to His cause, you will take every increase of your substance into His presence and devote it to His praise; you will regard every appeal which is made to your Christian benevolence as an appeal to that solemn treaty which made you His, and you will honour it accordingly; you will deeply feel the penury of all riches as an expression of your love to Him; Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, or the beasts thereof an offering large enough to satisfy the cravings of your love.—*Ibid.*

THE SUPREME PORTION OF MAN.

(Verse 20.)

"The Lord spake unto Aaron; . . .
I am thy part and thine inheritance
among the children of Israel."

"The possession of the priests and
Levites did not consist in the revenues
assigned to them by God, but in the

possession of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the same sense in which the tribe of Levi was the peculiar possession of Jehovah out of the whole of the people of possession, was Jehovah also the peculiar possession of Levi; and just as the other tribes were to live upon what was afforded by the land assigned them as a possession, Levi was to live upon what Jehovah bestowed upon it. And inasmuch as not only the whole land of the twelve tribes, with which Jehovah had enfeoffed them, but the whole earth belonged to Jehovah (Exod. xix. 5), He was necessarily to be regarded as the greatest possession of all, beyond which nothing greater is conceivable, and in comparison with which every other possession is to be regarded as nothing. Hence it was evidently the greatest privilege and highest honour to have Him for a portion and possession (*Bahr, Symbolik*, ii. p. 44). "For truly," as *Masius* writes (Com. on Josh.) "he who possesses God possesses all things; and the worship (*cultus*) of Him is infinitely fuller of delight, and far more productive, than the cultivation (*cultus*) of any soil."—*Keil and Del.*

God is revealed in His Word as the portion of all godly souls (see Psa. xvi. 5; lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; Lam. iii. 24). This is the pre-eminent portion; no inheritance can be compared with this.

I. This portion is all-sufficient.

God is the portion of His people inasmuch as they possess His *mind*; He has revealed to them His thoughts and will concerning them. They possess His *heart*; He is profoundly and affectionately interested in their welfare; He loves them with an infinite love. Our position is that having Him they have all-sufficiency,—they have—

1. *His wisdom for their direction.* "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye."

2. *His power for their protection.* "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress," &c. (Psa. xci. 2-13). "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," &c. (Psa. cxxi. 3-8).

3. *His providence for their supply.* "No good will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "My God shall supply all your need," &c.

4. *His grace for their spiritual support.* "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," &c. (2 Cor. ix. 8).

5. *His Heaven for their home.* "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. (John xiv. 2, 3). He has begotten them "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," &c. (1 Pet. iii. 5). "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them," &c. (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

Well did Savonarola enquire, "What must not he possess who possesses the Possessor of all?" (*a*)

II. This portion is joy-inspiring.

In the realization of the presence and love of God there is the highest, holiest joy. "In Thy presence there is fulness of joy," &c. The perfection of the blessedness of heaven is in the full manifestation of His gracious presence. Possessing Him,—

1. The joy of *satisfied affections* is ours. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The heart loves God, and rejoices in being loved by Him who is infinitely true and beautiful and good, who changeth not, and who abideth for ever.

2. The joy of *sweet and sanctified fellowship* is ours. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The influence of this fellowship was well expressed by the two disciples at Emmaus,—“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us?” &c.

3. The joy of *true progress* is ours. Under the influence of His blessed presence all the capacities and faculties of our being are quickened into holy activity, and sustained in continuous progress. Realizing His presence and fellowship our being grows into likeness

to Him; and such growth is unspeakably joyous. Thus the conscious possession of God as our "part and inheritance" is the highest blessedness. (b)

"O this is life, and peace, and joy,
My God, to find Thee so—
Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear
And all Thy love to know."—*Babier*.

III. This portion is inalienable.

Where shall we find a secure and lasting inheritance. Not in this world; not in anything material, or temporal. *Riches* are not inalienable; they "certainly make themselves wings; they fly away," &c. "Trust not in uncertain riches." *Pleasures* are not inalienable. The pleasures of this world can only be enjoyed for a season, and that a brief one. *Honours* are of very uncertain tenure; the hero of one day is frequently execrated the next. *Friends* are not abiding; sometimes they are lost to us

by unfaithfulness; sometimes they are removed from us by death. Our *bodily health* is precarious. Even our *mental sanity and strength* we cannot claim as unchangeably, and for ever ours. There is but one immutable and inalienable "part and inheritance," that is God. He changes not; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He abideth for ever; He loveth for ever. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Even death cannot deprive us of this inheritance. "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Death rather makes our inheritance more fully and perfectly ours; it introduces us to a more complete and constant realization of His presence. After death "we shall see Him as He is." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

Is this "part and inheritance" ours?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We have a right, each of us—if we are in Christ—we have a right to expect this sufficiency, because it is promised in the Bible. We gather it from the declarations of Scripture. Listen to them, they are yours. "Thus saith the Lord who created thee, O Jacob, who formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name." What a beautiful thought that is! Just get the meaning and beauty out of it. How many thousands of believers, thousands upon thousands of believers, have there been in the world from the beginning of its history until now—thousands in the patriarchal ages who looked through the glass, and who saw, dimly, the streak of the morning in the distance, and, even with that streak of light, were glad—thousands in the prophetic times, who discerned it in the brightness of a nearer vision—thousands who looked in its full-orbed lustre, when Christ came into the world—thousands upon thousands, since that time, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—thousands who are now upon the earth, working out their salvation with fear and trembling—thousands upon thousands that shall come into the Church in the time of its millennial glory, when the gates of it shall not be shut day nor night, because the porter shall have no chance of shutting them, the people crowd in so fast. Now, get all that mass of believers, past, present, and future, a company that no man can number;

and to each of them God comes in this promise, and says, "I have called thee by thy name, I know all about thee,"—that is, I have not a merely vague, indefinite knowledge of thee; as an individual believer I know thy name, I could single thee out of millions, I could tell the world all thy solitudes, and all thy apprehensions, and all thy hopes, and all thy sorrows—"I have called thee by thy name." Oh, precious promise! Take it to your hearts. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers—deeper than the waters—"they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee."—Listen again, "The Lord God is a sun and shield"—light and protection; that nearly embraces all our wants—"He will give grace and glory." Is there anything left out? And if there are any of you so perversely clever and so mischievously ingenious in multiplying arguments in favour of your own despair, that you can conceive of some rare and precious blessing that is not wrapped up either in grace or glory—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "Cast all thy care." "Nay," the rebel heart says, "there is some little of it I must bear myself; something that has reference to the heart's bitterness, that it alone knoweth;

or to the heart's deep, dark sorrow, with which no stranger intermeddles—that I must bear myself." "Cast *all* thy care upon Me, for I care for thee." What! distrustful still? Can you not take God at His word? Hark! He condescends to expostulate with you upon your unbelief: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord"—how often have you said that in the time of your sorrow! you know you have—"My way is hid from the Lord, my judgment is passed over from my God. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint." He does not merely take his swoon away and leave him weakly; He makes him strong. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength". . . . Brethren, are you in Christ? Then all that belongs to the covenant is yours. Yours is the present heritage, yours is the future recompense of reward.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(b) Haws, that are for hogs, grow upon every hedge; but roses, that are for men, only grow in pleasant gardens. Though many have counterfeit jewels, yet there are but a few that have the true diamond; though many have their earthly portions, yet there are but a few that have God for their portion. Why have the saints in heaven more joy and delight than the saints on earth, but because they have a clearer and a fuller knowledge of their interest and propriety in God than the others have? The knowledge of a man's propriety in God is the comfort of comforts. Propriety makes every comfort a pleasurable comfort, a delightful comfort. When a man walks in a fair meadow, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a pleasant garden, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a fruitful corn-field, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a stately habitation, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a rich mine, and can write *mine* upon it; oh! how doth it please him? how doth it

delight him? how doth it joy and rejoice him? Of all words, this word *meum* is the sweetest and the comfortablest. Ah! when a man can look upon God and write *meum*; when he can look upon God, and say, "This God is my portion;" when he can look upon God, and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28), how will all the *spriazs* of joy rise in his soul! Oh, who can but joy to be owner of that God who fills heaven and earth with His fulness? who can but rejoice to have Him for his portion, in having Whom he hath all things, in having Whom he can want nothing? The serious thoughts of our propriety in God will add much sweet to all our sweets; yea, it will make every bitter sweet.—*Brooks.*

(c) None of your dearest and most cherished loves are at all worthy to sit upon the throne of your heart—far down in the scale must they be placed, when the God who gave them to you is brought into comparison. That broad bosom of your beloved husband beats fondly and faithfully, but when death lays it low, as ere long it must, how wretched will be your condition if you have not an everlasting Comforter upon whose breast to lean! Those dear little sparkling eyes, which are like stars in the heaven of your social joy, if these be the gods of your idolatry, how wretched will you be when their brightness is dim, and the mother's joy is mouldering back to dust! Happy is he who hath an everlasting joy and an undying comfort; and there is none in this respect like unto the God of Jeshurun. There would be fewer broken hearts if hearts were more completely the Lord's. We should have no rebellious spirits if, when we had our joys, we used them lawfully, and did not too much build our hopes upon them. All beneath the moon will wane. Everything on those shores ebbs and flows like the sea. Everything beneath the sun will be eclipsed. You will not find in time that which is only to be discovered in eternity, namely an immutable and unfailing source of comfort.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XIX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

"Ordinances respecting purification from the uncleanness of death."

The association of death with sin (Gen. ii. 17) sufficiently explains the ideas on which these ordinances are based. The principle that death and all pertaining to it, as being the manifestation and result of sin, are defiling, and so lead to interruption of the living relationship between God and

His people, is not now introduced for the first time, nor is it at all peculiar to the Mosaic law. It was, on the contrary, traditional amongst the Israelites from the earliest times, is assumed in various enactments made already (cf. v. 2; ix. 6, sqq.; Lev. x. 1, 7; xi. 8, 11, 24; xxi. 1, sqq.), and is traceable in various forms amongst many nations of antiquity.

The rites of purifying prescribed amongst these various nations have points of similarity to those laid down in this chapter; and indeed sprinklings and washings would naturally form a part in them all (cf. ch. viii. 7). Moses then adopted here, as elsewhere, existing and ancient customs, with significant additions, as helps in the spiritual education of his people.

The ordinance was probably given at this time because the plague, which happened (xvi. 46-50) about the matter of Korah, had spread the defilement of death so widely through the camp as to seem to require some special measures of purification, more particularly as the deaths through it were in an extraordinary manner the penalty of sin. Occasion is accordingly taken to introduce a new ordinance on the whole subject, which might serve to re-assure the affrighted people at the time, supply a ready means of relief from this sort of uncleanness for the future, and by the typical character of its new elements, provide a vehicle for important instruction as to a more real Atonement afterwards to be revealed."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 2. *The ordinance of the law.* Keil and Del.: "A '*statute of instruction*,' or law-statute. This combination of the two words commonly used for law and statute, which is only met with again in chap. xxxi. 21, and there, as here, in connection with a rule relating to purification from the uncleanness of death, is probably intended to give emphasis to the design of the law about to be given, to point it out as one of great importance."

Red heifer פָּרָה is not a cow generally, but a young cow, a heifer, δάμαλις (lxx.), *juvencæ*, between the calf and the full-grown cow. . . . The sacrificial animal was not to be a bullock, as in the case of the ordinary sin-offering of the congregation (Lev. iv. 14), but a female, because the female sex is the bearer of life (Gen. iii. 20), a פָּרָה, i.e., *lit.*, the fruit-bringing; and of a red colour, not because the blood-red colour points to

sin, but as the colour of the most 'intensive life,' which has its seat in the blood, and shows itself in the red colour of the face (the cheeks and lips); and one 'upon which no yoke had ever come,' i.e., whose vital energy had not yet been crippled by labour under the yoke. Lastly, like all the sacrificial animals, it was to be uninjured and free from faults, inasmuch as the idea of representation, which lay at the foundation of all the sacrifices, but more especially of the sin-offerings, demanded natural sinlessness and original purity, quite as much as imputed sin and transferred uncleanness. Whilst the last-mentioned prerequisite showed that the victim was well fitted for bearing sin, the other attributes indicated the fulness of life and power in their highest forms, and qualified it to form a powerful antidote to death. As thus appointed to furnish a re-agent against death and mortal corruption, the sacrificial animal was to possess throughout, viz., in colour, in sex, and in the character of its body, the fulness of life in its greatest freshness and vigour."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Unto Eleazar.* Not unto Aaron, the high priest, because the ordinance was closely connected with death and the uncleanness arising therefrom, and such uncleanness the high priest was commanded to avoid (Lev. xxi. 11).

Without the camp, because the defilement was regarded as transferred to the sacrificial animal.

Slay her. It was not the business of the priest to slay her, but she was to be slain "before his face."

Verse 4. *Sprinkle of her blood directly, &c.* The priest was to sprinkle the blood in the direction of the front of the tabernacle.

Seven times. Seven indicating perfection. Comp. Lev. iv. 6, 17.

Verse 5. *Burn the heifer, &c.* "The defilement, being external, extended to the whole body of the animal: hence the propriety of burning the victim entire and everything connected with it."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 6. *Cedar-wood and hyssop, &c.*

"In this sacrifice, the blood, which was generally poured out at the foot of the altar, was burned along with the rest, and the ashes to be obtained were impregnated with the substance thereof. But in order still further to increase the strength of these ashes, which were already well fitted to serve as a powerful antidote to the corruption of death, as being the incorruptible residuum of the sin-offering which had not been destroyed by the fire, cedar-wood was thrown into the fire, as the symbol of the incorruptible continuance of life; and hyssop, as the symbol of purification from the corruption of death; and scarlet-wool, the deep red of which shadowed forth the strongest vital energy—(see Lev. xiv. 6)—so that the ashes might be regarded as the quintessence of all that purified and strengthened life, refined and sublimated by the fire." (*Leyrer.*)—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 7-10. All who had to do with the heifer or her ashes became unclean until the evening, because of the defilement of sin and death which had been transferred to her. Comp. Lev. xvi. 21, 22, 26.

Verse 11. *Unclean seven days.* "How low does this lay man! He who touched a dead *beast* was only unclean for *one day* (Lev. xi. 24, 27, 39); but he who touches a dead *man* is unclean for *seven days*. This was certainly designed to mark the peculiar impurity of man,

and to show his sinfulness—*seven times worse than the vilest animal!* O thou son of the morning, how art thou fallen!"—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 17. *Running water shall be put, &c.* Heb. as in margin: "Living waters shall be given." "The waters of wells and fountains are called living waters, and are very much esteemed" (Lev. xiv. 5, 50; Num. xix. 17).—*John Jahn, D.D.*

Verse 19. *On the third day and on the seventh day.* The double purification indicates the depth of the defilement which was to be removed.

Verse 20. *That soul shall be cut off, &c.* This is repeated here from verse 13, to render the warning more impressive. Some interpret the phrase as meaning cut off by death; others, cut off by exclusion from the political and religious privileges of the nation. "In Exodus xxxi. 14, 15, *death* is prescribed as the manner of *cutting off* from among the people the Sabbath-breaker; see also xxxv. 2. In Lev. xvii. 4, *cutting off* from among the people is the penalty of killing a clean beast and not bringing it as an offering; but in xxiv. 17, 'He that killeth any *man* shall surely be *put to death*.' (See also Exod. xxi. 12; Num. xxxv. 31.) In Lev. xviii. 29, *cutting off* is the punishment for unnatural crime; in Exod. xxii. 19, *death*. So that it would appear as if cutting off generally, but not always, implied death at man's hand."—*H. Alford, D.D.*, on Genesis xvii. 14.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE RED HEIFER; A PARABLE OF THE POLLUTION OF SIN AND THE DIVINE METHOD OF CLEANSING THEREFROM.

(Whole Chapter.)

Let us consider—

I. The defiling nature of sin.

On this point the chapter suggests—

1. *Sin is defiling in its nature.* A dead body and everything pertaining thereto are represented as polluting those who came near to them. Death, and the corruption arising from it, are set forth as a Parable of sin and its influence. Most of the deaths which occurred in the

wilderness were literally the punishment of sin. Thousands died by the plague on account of their rebellion (chap. xvi. 49). The whole of one generation, with very few exceptions, was doomed to die in the desert because of unbelief (chap. xiv. 28-30). Thus death would speak to them of the sin which caused it. Sin is a polluting thing. It defiles the soul even in its purest affections; it corrupts

its principles ; it poisons its motives, &c. No one can have anything to do with sin without incurring contamination.

2. *The defiling power of sin is of great virulence.* "The extreme virulence of the uncleanness is taught by the regulations that the victim should be wholly consumed outside the camp, whereas generally certain parts were consumed on the altar, and the offal only outside the camp (comp. Lev. iv. 11, 12); that the blood was sprinkled *towards* and not *before* the sanctuary; that the officiating minister should be neither the high-priest, nor yet simply a priest, but the *presumptive* high priest, the office being too impure for the first, and too important for the second; that even the priest and the person that burnt the heifer were rendered unclean by reason of their contact with the victim; and, lastly, that the purification should be effected, not simply by the use of water, but of water mixed with ashes, which served as a lye, and would therefore have peculiarly cleansing properties." The virulence of the uncleanness is also manifest in the ways in which it was incurred. If a person entered a tent, wherein anyone had died, before it was purified (ver. 14), or touched the bone of a dead man, or a grave (ver. 16), he became unclean; and if he, before his purification, touched anyone, the person so touched also became unclean (ver. 22). We have in this a striking parable of the virulence of the contagion of sin. Association with sinners is perilous. Man's safety is in loathing sin and shunning it in all its forms. (a).

3. *The defiling power of sin is wide-spread.* Death was present in the tent, and in the open field. The Israelite that would avoid its contamination had need to exercise constant watchfulness. Sin surrounds us. In this world the moral atmosphere is infected with it. The danger of contamination is great and constant. In our amusements, in literature, in society, in business, in politics, in every department of life, sin is present and active.

II. The necessity of cleansing from sin.

The legislation of this chapter was based upon that necessity. If any person failed to cleanse himself from the pollution of death, he was "cut off from among the congregation," he was excluded from the society, and deprived of the privileges of his nation. If sin be not cleansed from the soul, it will prove its ruin. The presence and blessing of God are indispensable to our spiritual well being. But sin separates the soul from God (comp. Isa. lix. 2; Col. i. 21), and so cuts it off from the great Source of life and light. Sin excludes from the fellowship of the people of God. Generally and as a rule it does so in this world; the Church of Christ should be pure, and striving for perfect purity. Sin invariably and infallibly excludes from Heaven (Rev. xxi. 27). We must get rid of sin or be utterly undone.

III. The provision for cleansing from sin.

Regarding this as illustrated by the arrangements for cleansing those who were defiled by death, we notice—

1. *It is Divine in its origin.* God instituted this cleansing ordinance of the Red Heifer; "the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance," &c. The provision for spiritual cleansing is of God. The idea of getting rid of sin came from Him. The sacrifice by which it is put away He bestowed. The agencies which are used in the work He instituted. He gave His Son, His Spirit, Gospel ministries, &c. Human salvation is of Divine origin.

2. *It involves the sacrifice of the most perfect life.* The directions concerning the sacrificial victim, given in verse 2, as to its sex, its colour, and its non-acquaintance with the yoke, all point to intensity and fulness of life and power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 2). Further, it was to be perfect: "wherein is no blemish." Moreover the "cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet," which were burnt with the heifer, indicated strength and continuance of life, and

purifying power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 6). All this clearly points to the perfect sacrifice of the perfect life of Jesus Christ. His was the pre-eminent life. "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." His was the perfect life. "He offered Himself without spot to God." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (b). By His self-sacrifice, which exhibits the most perfect obedience and utter devotion to the will of God, and the fullest, sublimest expression of the love of God, Christ cleanseth the souls of men from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is the all-sufficient and the only true provision for purifying the soul of man from moral defilement. (c)

3. *It is invariable in its efficacy.* "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean" (verse 12). "And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," &c. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through

the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Who shall say "how much more"? The blood of Christ cleanseth completely from all sin all who seek Him in faith.

IV. *The application of the provision for cleansing from sin.*

The Israelite who was defiled by the dead must purify himself with the "water of separation." "A clean person must take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," in order that he may be purified. If this were not done, the existence of the provision for cleansing, so far from profiting him, would rather be the occasion of condemnation; he refuses the means of cleansing provided for him, and he "shall be cut off from among the congregation" (verse 20). And if Christ be not received by faith He will profit us nothing. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." If we believe not on Him, we shall not only not be cleansed and saved from sin, but shall be condemned for unbelief (comp. John iii. 18. 36). On Him let us believe; for He alone can cleanse and save us. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The impious lives of the wicked are as contagious as the most fearful plague that infects the air. When the doves of Christ lie among such pots, their yellow feathers are sullied. You may observe that in the oven the fine bread frequently hangs upon the coarse; but the coarse very seldom adheres to the fine. If you mix an equal portion of sour vinegar and sweet wine together, you will find that the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine sweeten the vinegar. That is a sound body that continues healthy in a pest-house. It is a far greater wonder to see a saint maintain his purity among sinners, than it is to behold a sinner becoming pure among saints. Christians are not always like fish, which retain their freshness in a salt sea; or like the rose, which preserves its sweetness among the most noisome weeds; or like the fire, which burns the hottest when the season is coldest. A good man was once heard to lament, "that as often as he went into the company of the wicked, he returned less a man

from them than he was before he joined with them." The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like persons who are much exposed to the sun, insensibly tanned.—*William Secker.*

(b) When you contemplate the Saviour, you find all the virtues enshrined in Him; other men are stars, but He is a constellation, nay, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of splendour; other men are gems and jewels, but He is the crown imperial where every jewel glitters; other men furnish but a part of the picture, and the background is left, or else there is something in the foreground that is but roughly touched, but He furnishes the whole; not the minutest portion is neglected; the character is perfect and matchless. If I look at Peter, I admire his courage; if I look at Paul, I wonder at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God; if I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing; but when I look to the Saviour, I am not so much attracted by

any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense; the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For an illustration on the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, see p. 141.

(c) It is not because God is indifferent to moral qualities that He loves sinners. His love is medicinal. His life is a world-nursing life. He cleanses whom He loves, that He may love yet more. God's nature is infinitely healing and cleansing. They that are brought in contact with the Divine heart feel it by the growth that instantly begins in them. And His being is so capacious that all the wants of all sinful creatures, through endless ages, neither exhaust nor weary Him. Ten thousand armies might bathe in the ocean, and neither sully its purity, nor exhaust its cleansing power. But the ocean is but a cup by the side of God's heart. Realms and orbs may bathe and rise into purity; no words will ever hint or dimly paint the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. It is love that pours, endless and spontaneous, just as sunlight does—simply because God is love. By the side of Christ, a mother's love—that on earth shines high above all other, as a star above night candles—is in comparison like those glimmering, expiring stars when the sun shines them into radiant eclipse. In the bosom of such a God there is salvation for every one that will trust Him. And what chances of safety or purity are there for

those who reject Him; who light their own candle, and walk in its pale glimmer, rather than in the noonday glory of God in Christ? —*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin, and he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed; but when he takes it out again, if his eye be clear, he says, "Alas! it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better; I must add a more pungent salt, I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart." He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time as he takes it out his own eyes become more keen, and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before. Then goeth he and taketh unto himself nitre and much soap, but when he has used it all, when he has gone to his church, when he has gone to his chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done I know not what to prove the genuineness of his repentance, ah! the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be, let him do what he may. Yet what your repentings cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, sinner, and that in one single day.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For illustrations on the appropriation of the provision see pp. 142, 190.

THE LAW OF THE RED HEIFER APPLIED.

(Whole Chapter.)

The symbols of the Jewish worship were instituted at special times. God did not put it forth as a system. It is like a house to which have been added rooms and offices and hall as the growth of the family has demanded more scope in which to maintain new and higher thoughts. One of such additions is found in the ordinance promulgated in this chapter. It had its origin in the wish to assuage the vivid fears of the people that they were not able to go near to the tabernacle and live. They had seen a terrible punishment overtake the men who had attempted to interfere with the positions held by Moses and Aaron: they had been awed when a sudden destruction was smiting down thousands in the camp: and they had been made conscious that their sins

rendered them utterly unfitted to be near the Holy One of Israel. But mercy has exhaustless remedies for human defilement. Aaron and the Levites are appointed to bear the sins of the holy things; a red unspotted heifer is commanded to be slain and burned, and its ashes to be used as a means of purifying the flesh from the uncleanness which hindered approach to the Lord of glory. Thus the new symbol is instituted when the people have become conscious that social impurity, impurity shared through and with others, as well as personal transgression, dooms to death. Wider views of what they need towards God cause Him to send out the beams of a light which is to dispel every doubt and fear.

In what ways did this ceremony lead

into such confidence? What were the letters by which the people could spell out God's thoughts of peace?

The chief lessons taught by the ordinance of the Red Heifer seem to be embraced in four propositions:—

I. Liability for social evil.

"All the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron" (chap. xvi. 41, sqq.). Might not the survivors reason thus: "If those who have died did wrong we have been equally wrong; if we are not erased from the roll of the living, there is, notwithstanding, an evil chargeable to us; partakers in a like offence we are worthy of a like condemnation; the evil has not exhausted itself on them, and we are liable in some form for their calamities; we cannot in this state of pollution go into the presence of God—is there not needed a purification for those social ills whose last and most affecting sign is death?" A very similar feeling of liability might be impressed on the men of our own generation. There are houses in narrow streets, badly ventilated, and steaming with the odours of dirt-heaps and cess-pools. Warnings have been given, that such a position is laid open to dangerous attacks on health and life; but the warnings are trifled with or disbelieved. Then comes the "noisome pestilence." Young and old, strong and feeble, degraded and decent, are swept into the abyss of the dead. . . . Viewing those painful scenes, could just men, who had neglected to do as was advised, escape from self-censure and condemnation?

II. The ignominy of death.

The presence of, or contact with, the signs of the death of mankind, separated from communion with God in His sanctuary. Consciously or unconsciously no one could always avoid these. The human body becomes a loathsome thing by the stroke of death, and we are fain to bury it out of our sight. There is reason for believing that death is the openest sign of ignominy in our nature. . . . Only without us and above us, in the death of Christ Jesus, and in His rising from the dead, is that which

△ △

shows, along with the fearfulness of sin, the means of its removal.

III. Freedom from the consequences of sin is by application of a prepared remedy.

The several parts in the process of preparing the water of cleansing bear emblems to show what God requires for freeing from sin. The slaying of the Heifer, and the sprinkling of its blood, laid bare the foundation principles that "it is the blood which maketh atonement for the soul," that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." . . . Uncleaness incurred from the dead prevents approach to the holy Lord God. Separated from His presence on earth is a forecasting of an eternal separation—"that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (verse 13). But He has a remedy for this too. He provides means of purification, and thus of renewed access to Himself. Not only is the blood of bulls and goats shed, but the ashes of a heifer is also to "sprinkle the unclean, in order to sanctify to the purifying of the flesh," and render fit for all the privileges of acceptable worship. "He shall purify himself," &c. (verse 12). It is not enough that there are ashes, and water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop on hand; the persons needing the removal of the dangerous uncleaness must get those materials applied in the prescribed manner.

The remedy was not dependent for its efficacy upon its earthly aspects. Human hands made it ready and conveyed it to the recipients; but the sole power to take away the defilement lay in that of God which was in it. It signified to the people that there was another sphere than that in which they moved, and in which they were rendered unworthy to dwell in the Lord's presence; that they must *stand by faith* amid the workings of God. Did the eyes of any amongst them catch a glimpse of another manifestation of the love of God, in which ONE should be made righteousness and sanctification as well as redemption—a coming sacrifice whose blood should be shed, not only to be a "propitiation for sins," but also to

be "sprinkled on the conscience to purge it from dead works to serve the living God?" . . . Jesus has died, &c. The ransom price for our lives has not to be paid—it is paid, &c. "The gift of God is eternal life," &c.

IV. To be without fitness for standing before God acceptably is inexcusable and irretrievable.

Once purified did not do away with the necessity of being purified again when another defilement had been incurred. The new impurity must be removed by a new application, and the cleansing remedy was constantly available (verses 9, 10).

What could justify neglect of this remedy?—*D. G. Watt, M.A.*

THE RED HEIFER AN ANALOGUE OF THE CHRIST.

(Verses 1-10.)

Much has been written on the Red Heifer as a type of Christ which appears to us to be frivolous, and in no sense worthy of regard as an exposition of this portion of Scripture, because of the absence of Scriptural evidence that such things were intended in the ordinance. But we are warranted in looking for an analogy between the Red Heifer and the Christ by the comparison between them instituted in Heb. ix. 13, 14. It appears to us that the Red Heifer is an analogue of the Christ—

I. In its characteristics.

These may be classified thus:

1. *Fulness of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, upon which never came yoke." "The sex of the victim (female, and hence life-giving); its red colour (the colour of blood, the seat of life); its unimpaired vigour (never having borne the yoke); its youth; all these symbolised life in its fulness and freshness as the antidote of death." What Divine fulness of life there was in Jesus Christ! "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "I am He that liveth," or "the living One." He is the great antagonist of death and giver of life. See Acts ii. 24; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xv. 22; John x. 10; Col. iii. 3, 4.

2. *Perfection of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish." "Christ offered Himself without spot to God." He was "the Holy One and the Just;" "tempted in all points like as

we are, yet without sin;" "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" "Christ . . . a lamb without blemish and without spot." (a)

II. In the treatment to which it was subjected.

1. *The heifer was sacrificed.* "One shall slay her before" the face of the priest. She was regarded as bearing the uncleanness of the people, and was slain as "a sin-offering" (הַפָּאֵר, A. V., "a purification for sin," verses 9, 17) for the people. Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (comp. Isa. liii. 5-9; John vi. 51; Rom. v. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Thess. v. 10; Heb. x. 10). (b)

2. *The heifer was sacrificed "without the camp"* It was taken outside the camp because it was regarded as bearing the uncleanness for which it was to be sacrificed. Our Lord was crucified "without the gate" of Jerusalem, between two thieves, as if He were the vilest of men (comp. John xix. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 11, 12).

3. *The heifer was completely consumed.* "One shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn." The sacrifice of Christ was unreserved. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He offered Himself wholly, body, soul, and spirit, to God, for the redemption of man from sin.

III. In the purpose for which it was designed.

1. *The red heifer was intended to*

cleanse from ceremonial defilement. The ashes of the heifer were to be put in spring water; this water was to be sprinkled upon the unclean for their purification (comp. Heb. ix. 13, 14). Christ "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

2. *The ashes of the heifer were efficacious for this purpose* (verses 12, 19). The efficacy was not in the ashes themselves, but in the appointment of God, and the faith and obedience of His people. "How much more shall the blood of Christ?" &c. He can cleanse from sins of deepest dye, and make the soul radiant in purity (comp. 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5; vii. 14; Eph. v. 26, 27). (c)

3. *The ashes of the heifer were amply sufficient for this purpose.*

(1) As to number. They were intended for all the congregation of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them (ver. 10), and were enough for all. Christ "died for all," and His salvation is sufficient for all, free for all, offered to all (1 John ii. 2).

(2) As to time. The Jews say that the ashes of this heifer served till the

captivity, or nearly a thousand years. This statement is very questionable; but they would certainly last for a long time, as it was necessary to use very little at a time. Moreover, ashes are very incorruptible; so they symbolise the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till the whole ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."—*Cowper.* (d)

4. *The ashes of the heifer had to be personally applied to be efficacious.* The unclean person must be sprinkled with "the water of separation" on the third day and on the seventh day for his cleansing. Without this, the cleansing element was of no avail to him. So Christ must be accepted by faith, or His sacrificial life and death will profit us nothing.

Conclusion.

We are all defiled by sin: let us seek by faith to be cleansed by "the precious blood of Christ."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In Jesus Christ there was no sin. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His humanity was without stain or flaw, pure and perfect as on the day when "God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good." In Him there were no rebellious insurgences of appetite and passion, no disorderly conflict between the lower nature and the higher, but the flesh was in absolute subjection to the spirit, and His whole mind and heart in entire and strictest harmony with the mind and heart of God. So that there He stood, the very "beauty of holiness," the living human image of God; the perfect embodiment of the Divine ideal of humanity; of all mankind the only genuine Man. The Man on whom all eyes and hearts were to rest and fasten.—*J. H. Smith, M.A.*

(b) As the Son of Man, he took our place under the law, and stood representatively in our stead, that He might satisfy the law in our behalf; that he might render it perfect obedience, and offer Himself a public substitutionary victim to its offended majesty, redeeming us from its curse by "being made a curse for us." He thus "suffered for us," "the just for the unjust," suffered for us, not

merely beneficially, as a nursing-mother may suffer for her child, or a soldier for his country's good, but *substitutionally and penally*, in our place and stead. His person was substituted for our persons, His sufferings for our sufferings. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." He, the sinless, consented to be treated as a sinner, that we sinners might be treated as sinless. In this great, this public capacity, then, He, the Man, officially suffered, and officially died. There on the cross He hung, spotlessly pure and perfect, agonising under the imputation of the world's guilt, the sinless substitute for man's sinful race, the substitutionary Man, the representative sinner! There He hung, a voluntary victim to the violated majesty of the law, and in Him mankind representatively died. "For we thus judge," says St. Paul, "that if one died for all, then all died."—*Ibid.*

(c) "We have some little difficulty," said a scientific lecturer, "with the iron dyes; but the most troublesome of all are Turkey red rags. You see I have dipped this into my

solution, its red is paler, but it is still strong. If I steep it long enough to efface the colour entirely, the fibre will be destroyed; it will be useless for our manufacture. How, then, are we to dispose of our red rags? We leave their indelible dye as it is, and make them into blotting paper. Perhaps you wonder why your writing-pad is red. Now you know the reason."

What a striking illustration of the power of "the precious blood of Christ" to change and cleanse is furnished by the above explanation. The Spirit of God led the prophet Isaiah to write, not "though your sins be as blue as the sky, or as green as the olive leaf, or as black as night." He chose the very colour which modern science, with all its appliances, finds to be indestructible. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—*Sunday Teacher's Treasury*.

(d) I have found it an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think, that although it has been flowing on for six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want. And when I have watched the rise of the sun as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or, in a sky draped with golden curtains, sprang up from his ocean-bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and planted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvest of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliantly as ever; his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his natural floods of light less full, for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these but images of the fulness that is in Christ? Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing! For when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness, or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fulness of Christ shall flow on throughout eternity, in

the bliss of the redeemed.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Have we outlived the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and is the tale of His Cross a sound from which all the music has gone for ever? We need the sun to-day as we have ever needed it; the wind is still the breath of health to our dying bodies; still we find in the earth the bread without which we cannot live; these are our friends of whom we never tire; can it be that the only thing of which we are weary is God's answer to our souls' deepest need? Shall we keep everything but the blood of Christ? Shall the Cross go, and the sun be left? Verily as the sun withdrew at sight of that Cross and for the moment fled away, he would shine never more were that sacred tree hewn down by furious man. The blood of Christ, it is the fountain of immortality! The blood of Christ, it makes the soul's summer warm and beauteous! The blood of Christ, it binds all heaven, with its many mansions and throngs without number, in holy and indissoluble security! My soul, seek no other stream in which to drown thy leprosy! My lips, seek no other song with which to charge your music! My hands, seek no other task with which to prove your energy! I would be swallowed up in Christ. I would be nailed to His Cross. I would be baptized with His baptism. I would quail under the agony of His pain that I might triumph with Him in the glory of His resurrection. O my Jesus! My Saviour! Thine heart did burst for me, and all its sacred blood flowed for the cleansing of my sin. I need it all. I need it every day. I need it more and more. O search out the inmost recesses of my poor wild heart, and let Thy blood remove every stain of evil.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Mighty Saviour! repeat all Thy miracles by taking away the guilt and torment of my infinite sin.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE RED HEIFER.

(Verses 2, 3.)

The particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and His work, is just this—the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of believers. In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark—

I. That even the true Israelite, the true believer in Christ, is the subject of daily defilement.

We who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the Divine judgment seat. But in the matter of sanctification we are not, as yet, delivered from evil.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact that we do actually come into contact with sin, here imaged in the corruption of death (verse 11). We actually touch that dead thing, sin, by overt

acts of transgression. We are in close connection with sin, because sin is *in* ourselves. Hence we need to be constantly cleansed.

Moreover, we get defilement from *companionship with sinners* (ver. 14). The Great Physician could walk the lazar house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us. It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened therewith, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness. Hence we need daily cleansing, &c.

One reason why we are so constantly defiled is *our want of watchfulness* (ver. 15). You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under heaven without receiving defilement, if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness; but it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrow wounds us.

Sin is so desperately evil, that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean (ver. 16). Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul—a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said, that a thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin, &c.

Sin even when it is not seen, defiles, a man was defiled who touched a grave. Oh, how many graves there are of sin—things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable, and internally abominable! Many of our customs are but the graves of sin, &c.

The Jew was *in danger in the open fields* (ver. 16). You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. We are in daily danger of defilement.

II. That a purification has been provided.

If it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine. The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord, &c. You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification, for the unclean person had no right to any of these. The ultimate result in the Israelites' case would have been death. And certainly if you and I, though believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us still the daily defilement of sin, ere long it must end in spiritual death.

The Lord must have provided a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were His wisdom, where His love?* He has provided for everything else. But if this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, a failure would have occurred in a most important point. The love, the wisdom of God demands that there should be such a purification supplied.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this. There is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. It is inexhaustible. "If any man sin, we have an advocate." He is constantly an intercessor.

The work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case, for what is His business but constantly to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us; constantly to quicken, to enlighten, and to comfort?

Facts show that there is purification for present guilt. The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David. Peter. *We have tried it ourselves, &c.*

III. The red heifer sets forth, in a most admirable manner, the daily purification for daily sin.

It was a *heifer*. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel—for the whole Church of God; and the Church is always looked upon in Scripture as being the spouse—the bride—always feminine. It was a *red* heifer. Probably the red was chosen from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of

blood, which was always associated with atonement, and putting away of sin. When we think of Christ we always associate Him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. It was a heifer *without spot*. Our Christ had no spot of original sin, no blemish of actual sin. This red heifer was one *whereon never came yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us. "Lo, I come," &c. *The children of Israel provided it*. What for? That every man, and every woman, and every child might say, "I have a share in that heifer," &c. Christ shed His blood for all His people, and they have all a part and all an interest in Him.

There is yet to be observed *what was done with it*. First, *it was taken out of the camp*. Christ suffered without the camp. The red cow *was slain*. A *dying Saviour* that takes away our sin. *Eleazar dipped his finger in the warm blood*, and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection. Jesus has perfectly presented His bloody sacrifice. All this does not purify. Atonement precedes purification. They then took the body of the slain heifer . . . they consumed it utterly, &c. This sets forth the pangs of the Saviour, how God accounted Him unclean; how He was compelled to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, *the priest threw in cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet*. According to

Maimonides, the cedar-wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop, and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet; so what was seen by the people was the scarlet, which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment—"Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Everything still continues of the red colour, to set forth atonement for sin. Inside this scarlet there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual, and still within this is the cedar-wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness giving acceptance to the whole.

The pith of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. *The cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones, and dung, and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together, and carried away, and laid by in a clean place*. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*,—the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

It was applied *by hyssop*. Hyssop is always a type of faith. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."

Here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

RUINOUS NEGLECT.

(Verse 20.)

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation."

The text suggests the following observations:—

I. Man is polluted by sin.

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us." And, as Origen said, "Every sin sets a blot upon the soul."

II. God has provided a cleansing element for man's sin.

"There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

III. To be efficacious this cleansing element must be applied to man.

The unclean person had to "purify

himself" by being sprinkled with "the water of separation." There was no cleansing without the sprinkling. If we would be clean we must repent of the sin which defiles us, confess the sin to the great Cleanser, and pray to Him for pardon and purity. But especially, we must believe in the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "The heart," says Dr. Dykes, "which sets out with a hunger after righteousness; which finds that, to be worth having, righteousness must be from the heart outwards; which strives against inward defilement, and, under such a sense of sin as makes it a gentle censor of other men, carries each fresh stain to the blood of sprinkling at the mercy seat: that heart does by effort and degrees attain to purity."

IV. Man may neglect to avail himself of this cleansing element.

This neglect may arise from—

1. *Self-righteousness.* There are those who do not feel their need of the cleansing of the blood of Christ. (a)

2. *Unbelief.* Under deep conviction of sin, man sometimes feels that the defilement of his heart is so deep as to defy the efficacy of "the precious blood of Christ:" he does not believe that it has power to cleanse to the uttermost.

3. *Procrastination.* Some purpose

to seek to be cleansed from sin at some future time; they defer the great duty until they "have a convenient season."

Such persons often "resolve and re-resolve, and die the same." How great is the folly! and how tremendous the peril of this neglect!

V. Neglecting to avail himself of this cleansing element, man excludes himself from the highest and richest privileges.

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation." The man who is guilty of this great neglect excludes himself—

1. *From the Church on earth.* Its privileges are for those only who are "purifying their hearts by faith," and "washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb."

2. *From the blessedness of heaven.* No impurity can enter heaven. The redeemed there constitute "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish." Only "the pure in heart shall see God." "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (comp. *Psa.* xxiv. 3, 4; *Rev.* i. 5; vii. 14; xxi. 27). (b)

Let us not be guilty of this ruinous neglect; but let us by faith hasten to the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and there wash and be clean.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we cannot realise the blood until we have realised the sin. Where there is no conviction of sin—conviction amounting to the very anguish of the lost in hell—there can be no felt need of so extreme a remedy as is offered by the outpouring of the blood of Christ. A self-palliating iniquity may be cleansed by water. The light dust which bespots the outer garments may be removed by gentle means. When a man feels that he has not sinned deeply, he is in no mood to receive what he considers the tragic appeals of the gospel; they exceed the case; they destroy themselves by exaggeration; they speak with self-defeating violence. But let another kind of action be set up in the heart; let the man be brought to talk thus with himself—"I have sinned until my very soul is thrust down into hell; my sins have clouded out the mercy of God, so that I see it no longer; I have wounded the Almighty, I

have cut myself off from the fountain of life, I have blown out every light that was meant to help me upward, I am undone, lost, damned," and then he needs no painted cross, no typical sacrament, no ceremonial attitude, no priestly enchantment, he can be met by nothing but the sacrificial blood, the personal blood, the living blood, the precious blood of Christ.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) If a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there he could find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth; no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised; nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, that made him feel at home; nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an

isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined about his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not *bear* the face of the Living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! what have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One: without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord.

Holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is *not* heaven, is not a place of happiness, *except* to the holy. There are bodily indispositions which affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavours become ungrateful to the palate; and indispositions which impair the sight, tinging the fair face of nature with some sickly hue. In like manner there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste, and no man labouring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture calls "the fulness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."

Nay, I will venture to say more than this—it is fearful, but it is right to say it—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. We know how unhappy we are apt to feel at present, when alone in the midst of strangers, or of men of different tastes and habits to ourselves. How miserable, for example, would it be to have to live in a foreign land, among a people whose faces we never saw before, and whose language we could not learn. And this is but a faint illustration of the loneliness of a man of earthly dispositions and tastes thrown into the society of saints and angels. How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like himself, he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in His presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the eternal eye was ever upon him; and that eye of holiness, which is joy and life to

holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change His nature. Holy He must ever be. But while He is holy no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very "heaven that is over their heads" will be "brass" to them.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Have we a hope that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is?" Then must "every man that hath this hope in Him purify himself, even as He is pure." For in at the gates of that City—so unlike the cities of this world—"there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth." That City's streets are of gold that is pure; the river which waters it is a pure river; and the fine linen in which its sainted citizens do walk is clean and white. Even the elder Church could answer its own question,

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in His holy place?"

by saying,

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

Sin-stained and evil-hearted men as we are, it is here, and now, that this purification must be wrought. What need have we to have often upon our lips the prayer,

"O God, make clean our hearts within us!"

Yet let us not be dismayed. Some little purity of heart he must have began to possess who ever looked at all into the face of Jesus Christ as the image of His Father's grace and truth. Now, therefore, let us continue to gaze on *Him*, with whatever openness of eye we have to see His glory; for it is the pure-heartedness of Jesus which maketh the disciple's heart pure; and we all, if "with open face" we do but "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So may God change us like the pure-hearted Son, and bring us one day where with all His servants we shall "see His face" in the endless beatific vision of the Celestial City.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

CHAPTER XX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the narrative of the third and last stage of the journey of Israel from Sinai to the Promised Land: this narrative is given in this 360

and the following chapter. This part of the journey commenced at Kadesh, was continued round the land of Edom (chap. xxi. 4), and ended at the heights

of Pisgah, in the country, or fields of Moab (chap. xxi. 20), near the Dead Sea and the Jordan. The events of the Journey seem to be arranged "rather in a classified order than in one that is strictly chronological." Thus the attack upon Israel by the Canaanitish king of Arad (chap. xxi. 1-3) was made during the march from Kadesh to Mount Hor. Chronologically Keil and Del. would place the brief narrative between the first and second clause of ver. 22 of chap. xx.

Verse 1. *The whole congregation.* Probably during the time of their penal wanderings, nearly thirty-eight years, "the congregation" was to some extent broken up and scattered abroad in the wilderness of Paran, so as to facilitate the pasturage of the flocks and herds. Now "the whole congregation" again assembles in the same locality where the sentence of the wandering had been passed upon them.

The desert of Zin (see notes on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21).

In the first month, of the fortieth year from the Exodus (comp. ver. 22-28 with chap. xxxiii. 38).

Kadesh (see notes on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 3. *When our brethren died before the Lord.* It is uncertain to what deaths they refer. Knobel supposes that the reference is to Korah and his company. Keil and Del. say that "the reference is to those who had died one by one during the thirty-seven years."

Verse 6. *They fell upon their faces* (comp. chaps. xiv. 5; xvi. 4).

The glory of the Lord appeared unto them (comp. chaps. xiv. 10; xvi. 19).

Verse 8. *Take the rod.* "Not the budding rod of xvii. 7, but that with which the miracles in Egypt had been wrought, and which had been used on a similar occasion at Rephidim, Exod. xvii. 5, sqq."—*Speaker's Comm.*

The rock. "The word always used for 'the rock' of Kadesh, in describing the second supply of water, is 'sela' or 'cliff,' in contradistinction to the usual word 'tzur'—'rock,' which is no less invariably applied to 'the rock' of Horeb—the scene of the first supply. It may

be difficult to determine the relative meaning of the two words. But it is almost certain that of the two, 'sela,' like our word 'cliff,' is the grander and more abrupt feature."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

The rock before their eyes. "To the first rock in front of them, and standing in their sight." *M. Nachmanides.*

Verse 9. *Moses took the rod from before the Lord.* The rod seems to have been laid up in the sanctuary, hence it is said to be taken "from before the Lord."

Verses 10, 11. This miraculous supply of water from the "cliff" is different from that from the rock (Exod. xvii. 1-7). "The first happened in the first year of the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt; this, when their journey was about to terminate, thirty-nine years after their departure. The first was an occasion to Moses of obeying punctually the orders of God; this is narrated as a sorrowful period, in which this legislator lost sight of the great motives which ought to have induced him to believe what God had spoken. The first happened in the desert of Sin on the mountain of Horeb; this in the desert of Zin on the frontier of Idumea."—*Saurin.*

Verse 10. *Hear now, ye rebels, &c.* (comp. *Psa.* cvi. 33).

Verse 12. *Because ye believed Me not, &c.* "What was the offence for which Moses was excluded from the Promised Land? It appears to have consisted in some or all of the following particulars: 1. God had commanded him (ver. 8) to take the rod in his hand, and go and SPEAK TO THE ROCK, and it should give forth water. It seems Moses did not think speaking would be sufficient, therefore he smote the rock without any command so to do. 2. He did this twice, which certainly in this case indicated a great perturbation of spirit, and want of attention to the presence of God. 3. He permitted his spirit to be carried away by a sense of the people's disobedience, and thus, being provoked, he was led to speak unadvisedly with his lips: 'Hear now, ye REBELS' (ver. 10). 4. He did not acknowledge GOD in the

miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honour to himself and Aaron: '*Must we fetch you water out of this rock?*' Thus it plainly appears that they did not properly believe in God and did not honour Him in the sight of the people; for in their presence they seem to express a doubt whether the thing could be possibly done. As Aaron appears to have been consenting in the above particulars, therefore he is also excluded from the Promised Land."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 13. *Meribah, i.e., strife.* In chap. xxvii. 14, it is spoken of as "*Meribah in Kadesh*," to distinguish it from Meribah in Horeb (Exod. xvii. 7).

He was sanctified in them. He vindicated His own sanctity by putting to shame the unbelieving murmuring of the people by the miraculous supply of water, and by punishing Moses and Aaron for their unbelief.

Verse 14. *Thy brother Israel.* The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob or Israel.

Verse 16. *Sent an angel.* "Cf. Exod. xiv. 19. The term is to be understood as importing generally the supernatural guidance under which Israel was."—*Speaker's Comm.* Knobel interprets it as signifying the pillar of cloud and fire. "In it was present '*the angel of God*' (Exod. xiv. 19), *i.e.,* the Divine presence, personally; in it appeared '*the glory of Jehovah*' (Exod. xvi. 10; xl. 34; chap. xvi. 42). It was an elementary appearance, made use of by Him who appointed and rules the elements, to signify to His people His immediate presence and guardianship."—*Alford* on Exod. xiii. 21.

Kadesh, a city, i.e., Kadesh-barnea (chap. xxxii. 8). It is probable that Barnea was the older or original name of the town, and that it was called Kadesh because of the events which took place there, and are recorded in chaps. xiii. 26—xiv., or of those which are recorded in this chapter (vers. 7-13), and that in those instances in which we find the name Kadesh in earlier portions of Scripture history it is applied proleptically, or by anticipation. "The

nearest approximation which can be given to a site for the city of Kadesh, may be probably attained by drawing a circle from the pass *Es-Sufa*, at the radius of about a day's journey; its south-western quadrant would intersect the wilderness of Paran, or *Et-Tih*, which is there overhung by the superimposed plateau of the mountain of the Amorites; while its south-eastern one will cross what has been designated as the wilderness of Zin. This seems to satisfy all the conditions of the passages of Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which refer to it. The nearest site in harmony with this view which has yet been suggested (Robinson, ii. 175), is undoubtedly the *Ain el-Weibeh*."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 17. *Let us pass through thy country.* The entrance to Canaan from the South was very difficult by reason of the intervening mountains, which were lofty and steep. Moses, therefore, proposed to enter it from the east, across the Jordan. "In order to gain the banks of the Jordan by the shortest route they had to march nearly due east from Kadesh, and pass through the heart of the Edomitish mountains. These are lofty and precipitous, traversed by two or three narrow defiles, of which one (the *Wady Ghuweir*) only is practicable for an army. Hence the necessity of the request, v. 17."—*Speaker's Comm.* *Ain el-Weibeh* "is nearly opposite the *Wady Ghuweir*, the great opening into the steep eastern wall of the Arabah, and, therefore, the most probable '*highway*' by which to '*pass through the border*' of Edom."—*Biblical Dict.*

The King's high way. Heb. "the King's way," *i.e.,* "the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the '*sultan's road*' (*Derb es Sultan*) or '*emperor's road*,' as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19. *I will only, without, &c.* Heb. "*lit., 'it is nothing at all; I will go through with my feet:*' *i.e.,* we want

no great thing ; we will only make use of the high road."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *And Edom came out against him.* "The Israelites without awaiting at Kadesh the return of their ambassadors, commenced their eastward march. At the tidings of their approach the Edomites mustered their forces to oppose them; and on crossing the Arabah they found their ascent through the mountains barred. The notice of this is inserted here to complete the narrative; but in order of time it comes after the march of v. 22."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 22. *Mount Hor.* Heb. lit. "Hor the mountain." הֹר *Hor*, "is an old form for הָרַר," *Har*.—*Fuerst.* So that the meaning of the name is simply "the mountain of mountains." "It is one of the very few spots connected with the wanderings of the Israelites which admits of no reasonable doubt. The proofs of the identity of *Jebel Harûn*, as it is now called, with Mount Hor, are—(1) The situation 'by the coast of the land of Edom,' where it is emphatically 'the mountain' (Hor) Num. xx. 23. (2) The statement of Josephus (Ant. IV. iv. 7), that Aaron's

death occurred on a high mountain enclosing Petra. (3) The modern name and traditional sanctity of the mountain as connected with Aaron's tomb. The mountain is marked far and near by its double top, which rises like a huge castellated building from a lower base, and on one of these is the Mahometan chapel erected out of the remains of some earlier and more sumptuous building over the supposed grave."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

"It is almost unnecessary to state that it is situated on the eastern side of the great valley of the Arabah, the highest and most conspicuous of the whole range of the sandstone mountains of Edom, having close beneath it on its eastern side—though strange to say the two are not visible to each other—the mysterious city of Petra. . . . Its height, according to the latest measurement, is 4800 feet (Eng.) above the Mediterranean, that is to say, about 1700 feet above the town of Petra, 4000 above the level of the Arabah, and more than 6000 above the Dead Sea."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 26. *Strip Aaron of his garments* (comp. Lev. viii. 7-9).

THE DEATH OF MIRIAM.

(Verse 1.)

Two preliminary points are suggested by the assembling of "the whole congregation in the desert of Zin":

First: *The loss that sin inflicts upon a people.* After nearly thirty-eight years the entire nation is congregated in the place where the sentence of penal wandering had been passed upon them. For all these years the sin of the rebellious people arrested their national history. Sin, whether in the individual or the nation, checks progress, and inflicts loss and injury.

Second: *The control of God over human history.* When the time fixed in the Divine purposes for the re-assembling of the people arrives, they again gather themselves together. The hand of the

Lord is on the affairs of men, directing, restraining, overruling them for good. "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

The death of Miriam suggests the following observations—

I. Death terminates the most protracted life.

Assuming that Miriam was 10 or 12 years old when Moses was born (and her conduct as watcher over her infant brother [Exod. iii. 4-8] indicates that she was of fully that age), she must have been at the time of her death 130 years old. Hers was a long life; but death closed it. He whose life-pilgrimage is longest, reaches the end of his journey at last. "Yea, though he live

a thousand years twice told : do not all go to one place ?" (a)

II. Death terminates the most eventful life.

Very eventful had been the life of Miriam.

1. *The girl watching over the life of her infant brother* (Exod. iii. 4-8). When we reflect upon the destiny marked out for her brother by God, how important was her duty at that time !

2. *The experienced woman sharing in the interest and action of the stirring events which led to the great emancipation from Egypt.* It appears to us a moral certainty that those events awakened her deep interest and aroused her to earnest effort.

3. *The prophetess leading the exultant songs and dances of a triumphant people* (Exod. xv. 20, 21).

4. *The envious woman aspiring after equality with, and speaking against her greater brother* (chap. xii. 1, 2). She was of a noble nature, yet she was capable of meanness, detraction, &c. Here is the blot upon her otherwise fair reputation.

5. *The guilty woman smitten with leprosy because of the sin* (chap. xii. 9, 10). Her distinguished position and gifts could not avert from her the just punishment of her sin.

6. *The leprous woman healed in answer to the prayer of the brother whom she had spoken against* (chap. xii. 13-15). The most stirring and eventful life is closed by death, as well as the quiet and monotonous one.

III. Death terminates the most distinguished life.

1. *Miriam was distinguished by her gifts.* Prophetic gifts are ascribed to her. "Miriam, the prophetess," is her acknowledged title (Exod. xv. 20). "The prophetic power showed itself in her under the same form as that which it assumed in the days of Samuel and David — poetry, accompanied with music and processions" (comp. Exod. xv. 20, 21 ; Judg. v. ; 1 Sam. x. 5). Death spares not even the most richly gifted of our race. (b)

2. *Miriam was distinguished by her position.* A very high position is given to her in the Sacred Scriptures. In Micah vi. 4, she is spoken of as one of the three deliverers of the enslaved people : "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." "How grand was her position is implied in the cry of anguish which goes up from both her brothers" when she was smitten with leprosy. "Alas, my lord ! . . . Let her not be as one dead," &c. (chap. xiii. 11-13). "And it is not less evident in the silent grief of the nation. 'The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.'" It is manifest also in the national mourning on account of her death ; for, according to Josephus (Ant. IV. iv. 6), "they mourned for her thirty days." Death brings down persons of the most exalted rank, and lays them low as those of the meanest station (comp. Job. iii. 13-19). (c)

IV. Death, by reason of sin, sometimes terminates life earlier than it otherwise would have done.

Miriam was not of the faithful few who entered the Promised Land. She sinned in murmuring and speaking against Moses ; and, therefore, she must die and find a lonely grave in the desert of Zin. How many lives are cut short in our day by violation of sanitary laws, by gluttony, and by drunkenness !

V. Death sometimes terminates life with suggestions of a life beyond.

It was so in the case of Miriam. Can we think that the gifts with which she was so richly endowed, and the treasures of experience which in her long and eventful life she had gathered, were all lost at death ? This would be in utter opposition to the analogy of the Divine arrangements in the universe. In nature we can trace no sign of waste ; the most scrupulous economy may be observed in all the provinces of the material realm. Can we imagine that, under the rule of the same Divine Being, there exists in the spiritual realm such waste as would be involved in the extinction of those who are gifted

in mind, ripe in experience, and holy in character? The Israelites did not leave Miriam in the desert of Zin: her body only remained there; her spirit, herself, passed swiftly to the great and glorious fellowship of the good "beyond the veil." (d)

"The dead are like the stars by day,
Withdrawn from mortal eye;
But not extinct, they hold their way
In glory through the sky.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All forms recipient of life die sometime. Some few may be privileged to survive the rest, even for thousands of years, as happens with certain trees, but the same death which in regard to the children of men, while it surprises many, skips not one, at last overpowers the most tenacious. "Come like shadows, so depart," is the law of the entire material creation,—in fact, as great a law as that it *lives*. . . . Birth, growth, and arriving at maturity, as completely imply decay and death as the source of a river implies the termination of it, or as spring and summer imply corn-fields and reaping. Hence, whatever the vigour and the powers of repair that may pertain to any given structure, whatever resistance it may offer to the shocks of Ages, Time, sooner or later, dissolves it;—careful, however, to renew whatever it takes away, and to convert, invariably, every end into a new beginning. There is not a grave in the whole circuit of nature that is not at the same moment a cradle.—*L. H. Grindon*.

(b) Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the merest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown, impalpable powder, they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Tophet? Ah! friends, you have to die. Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh! if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap; they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes. The ashes of an oak in a chimney are no epitaph of that, to tell me how high, or how large that was; it tells me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless too; it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing. As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes

Spirits from bondage thus set free
Vanish amidst immensity,
Where human thought, like human sight,
Fails to pursue their trackless flight."

Conclusion.

Since death is inevitable, it is the duty and interest of every one so to live that it shall be the door of admission into endless and blessed life. (e)

if the wind blow it thither; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the churchyard into the church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the church into the churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, "This is the patrician, this is the noble flour, and this the yeoman, this the plebeian bran?"—*Dr. J. Donne*.

(d) We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over, ready to be quenched. Ah! my brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death. The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and ere long even the pitcher shall be so remodelled as to become an aid to that light; its present breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it moulders into dust, shall live again; these weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them; these hands which grasp to-day the sword of conflict shall wave the palm-branch of triumph.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." That is the end of trouble. Now sorrow is crowned with hope! Now the gate is thrown open! Now the angel sits upon the stone! Now the emergent Christ walks forth, light and glorious as the sun in the heavens! Now the lost is found! Now all the stars bang like gems, and jewels, and treasures for us! Now, since Christ says that out of all these experiences He shall bring forth life, even as his own life was brought forth out of the tomb, what is there that we need trouble ourselves about?—*H. W. Beecher*.

(e) We shall all die! Do not let us postpone the intimation of our need of the Son of God until we are so faint that we can only receive him at the side of our death-bed. Do let us be more decent, more courteous, more civil. We shall all die! That is a fact that men have never been able to reason out of human history. If they could come to me and say, "We will guarantee you shall never die,

you shall always be as you are—*young, and strong, and active, and prosperous,*” then I might incline an ear to their reasonings more deferentially than I am disposed to do at present. But when they are talking to me against religion and against the deeper life, against faith and spiritual love and service of the unseen, what do I behold? Oh, this: Over their shoulder a grim, ghastly spectre called *Death!*—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Be ready, minister, see to it that thy church be in good order, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee; be ready, parent, see that your children are brought up in the fear of

God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, you that are busy in the world, see that your affairs are correct, see that you serve God with all your heart, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. O may we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE PRIVATIONS OF MAN AND THE RESOURCES OF GOD.

(Verses 2-11.)

I. There are privations in the pilgrimage of human life.

“And there was no water for the congregation.” Man is a dependent creature. Every human being has to endure privation in some form or another. Even the wealthiest of men find that there are some desirable things which wealth cannot purchase. But in the case before us the Israelites were suffering from want, not of the luxuries or comforts of life, but of one of its great necessities: there was a great lack of water. In our pilgrimage we are often without things which we have regarded as essential to our life. One man thinks that without *health* his life would be worthless; yet he has to submit to its loss for a time. To another man *prosperity* seems essential; to another, *friendship*, or some one *friend* or *relative*; yet of these they are sometimes deprived. Life, in our view, has many privations. This characteristic of our pilgrimage is for wise and gracious ends. Privation should remind us that we are pilgrims—incite us to confide in God—and discipline our spirits into patience and power.

II. The privations in the pilgrimage of life sometimes develop the evil tendencies of human nature.

“And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses,” &c. (vers. 2-5). Here privation is made the occasion of an outrageous

rebellion. The conduct of the people was—

1. *Unreasonable.* Why should they blame Moses and Aaron? Why chide Moses? He was not responsible for the lack of water. And as their leader, he was acting under Divine direction. It was neither reasonable nor fair to assail Moses and Aaron as they did.

2. *Cruel.* Moses and Aaron are of sorrowful heart because of the death of their distinguished sister; they need sympathy and consolation from the people; but instead thereof, they are unjustly and bitterly assailed. The feelings of our common humanity should have effectually restrained the people from treating their bereaved and sorrowing leaders after this fashion.

3. *Ungrateful.* The many and great mercies which God had bestowed upon them seem to be all and utterly lost sight of in their present trial. Not one word of thankfulness, but many words of complaint do they give utterance to. (a)

4. *Degraded.* “Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs,” &c. How unspeakably mournful is the degradation of manhood when human beings estimate “figs” more highly than freedom! They prefer slavery with figs and vines and pomegranates than liberty without them. Such a preference indicates their lack of true manhood, and the serfdom of their spirits. (b)

5. *Audaciously wicked.* How awful is the impiety to which they gave expression in their insolent interrogations! To wish that they had died by the stroke of God's judgment (ver. 3); to falsely impute the wickedest design to their true-hearted and God-appointed leader (ver. 4); to resent the emancipation which the Lord so graciously and gloriously wrought for them (ver. 5)—how atrociously wicked is all this!

The trials of life never leave us as they find us. Unless they, by the grace of God, are the occasion of blessing to us, they will lead, as in the case of these rebellious Israelites, to deterioration of character by the development of its evil attributes. They will lead either to increased patience and acquiescence in the will of God, or to increased fretfulness and rebellion against His will, &c. (c)

III. The privations in the pilgrimage of life, and the evils which are sometimes occasioned by them, impel the good to seek help of God.

"And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces." In their trial they betook themselves to God in prayer. Their action in this is very suggestive. It implies—

1. *Consciousness of need.* They felt their inability to deal with the disaffected and rebellious people; they sought the direction of Heaven, &c.

2. *Faith in the sufficiency of the Divine help.* The promptitude with which they resorted to the tabernacle, and cast themselves down in prayer to God, indicates their confidence in Him as their Helper. They believed in His wisdom for their guidance, &c.

3. *Faith in the efficacy of prayer to obtain the Divine help.* Moses and Aaron had proved convincingly the power of prayer on several occasions. "Ask, and it shall be given you," &c.

4. *Faith in the efficacy of unspoken prayer.* There is no record of any words addressed by them to God. The probability is, that their feelings and desires were too deep and strong to

be expressed in words. There may be true and effective prayer without speech. The holiest and profoundest longings of our souls cannot be expressed. In this respect they resemble the prayers of the Divine Spirit who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here, then, at the throne of Divine grace, is the refuge of the godly soul in time of trial. This refuge is (1) ever-accessible; (2) all-sufficient, &c.

IV. The privations in the pilgrimage of life are sometimes removed in answer to the prayer of the good.

"And the glory of the Lord appeared unto them, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod," &c. (vers. 6-11). Thus in answer to the prayer of Moses and Aaron, the privation of the people was removed by this copious supply of water. Concerning this supply of water, notice—

1. It was *Divine*. In a special sense it was the gift of God. Before it was given His "glory appeared;" He directed His servant what to do to obtain it; He bestowed it.

2. It was *miraculous*. Speaking to a cliff, or smiting it with a rod, were not natural means for obtaining water. But this water was supernaturally given. The miracle was manifest and indisputable. It was wrought in the presence of the assembled people. Spiritual blessings transcend nature. Redemption is supernatural in its origin, supernatural in its great Agent, &c.

3. It was *unmerited*. This murmuring, rebellious congregation did not deserve any benefit at the hand of God. He blessed them because He is "rich in mercy." Mankind did not merit redemption. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How great are our demerits! yet God blesses us with the treasures of His grace, &c.

4. It was *abundant*. "The water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts." How abundant are spiritual blessings! God "abundantly pardons"; He "makes all grace abound," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 8, 11). (d)

5. It was *free*. The water, without any charge or any restriction, was available to all. An emblem of the blessings of salvation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c. (Isa. lv. 1). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (e)

6. It was *bestowed in answer to prayer*. Moses and Aaron sought His help in their extremity, and He stilled the rebellious people by removing the privation from which they suffered. And in all the privations of the pilgrimage of our life, if we seek Him in prayer He will either remove the privation, or give us grace to endure it patiently; He will either lighten our burden or increase our strength. His resources are adequate to all the necessities of our pilgrimage. He is ever ready to communicate freely of these resources to all who seek Him.

"Am I thirsting? He will guide me
Where refreshing waters flow;
Faint or feeble, He'll provide me
Grace for every want I know."

—Monsell.

Conclusion.

1. *Guard against the sin of which Israel was guilty.* In time of trial, do not murmur; be patient, &c.

2. *Believe in and make use of the efficacy of prayer.* "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," &c.

3. *Exercise constant trust in God.* "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

"Then, my soul, since God doth love thee,
Faint not, droop not, do not fear;
Though His heaven is high above thee,
He Himself is ever near."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we must cease to wonder at them, and learn to confess our own corruption of heart, and proneness to yield and fall down in time of temptation, unless we be stayed up by the mighty hand of God. For albeit He be most gracious and merciful unto us, hedgeth us round about with many blessings, and compasseth us with riches of grace on every side, yet we forget them all if any one cross do any way lie upon us. If the Lord touch us with sickness, as with His little finger; with losses, with crosses, with poverty, or any misery, such is our impatience, that we always dwell upon the meditation of that want, we look upon it with our eyes, we handle it with our hands, we toss it in our minds, and never remember the multitude of His mercies, the peace of a good conscience, the loving countenance of the Lord, the seal of our adoption, the assurance of our salvation, the sweet taste of His love shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; so that one trouble doth more daunt us and strike us to the heart than many blessings can comfort and refresh us. But God, taking away outward blessings, giveth spiritual to His children, and doth sweeten the bitterness of the cross with inward consolation, and doth recompense it with heavenly grace, whereby we gain more in the spirit than we lose in the flesh.—*W. Attersoll*.

I remember in our Baptist martyrology the story of one of the Baptists of Holland escaping from his persecutors. A river was frozen over, and the good man crossed it safely, but his enemy was of greater bulk,

and the ice gave way under him. The Baptist, like a child of God as he was, turned round and rescued his persecutor just as he was sinking beneath the ice to a certain death. And what did the wretch do? As soon as ever he was safely on the shore he seized the man who had saved his life, and dragged him off to the prison from which he was only taken to be put to death! We wonder at such inhumanity; we are indignant at such base returns—but the returns which the ungodly make to God are baser far. I wonder myself as I talk to you—I wonder that I speak so calmly on so terribly humbling a theme; and, remembering our past lives, and our long ingratitude to God, I marvel that we do not turn this place into one vast Bochim, or place of weeping, and mingle our tears in a flood, with expressions of deep shame and self-abhorrence for our dealings towards God.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(b) There are others who seek how much they can call their own, by whatever means; of how much benefit they can hold a monopoly; from how large a place in God's universe they can keep other men off, and how much envy they can rouse in rivals and neighbours. These have never mastered their baser and greedier instincts, and so far have never known the Divine joy of being blessed for their benefactions, and have never tasted of the peace that passeth understanding. Very often God punishes us by letting us have what we seek. . . .

To the seekers of mere material and selfish comfort, one serious consideration is presented

by the progress of history. That kind of search is sinking. Every new day that breaks into the sky degrades it; both because new lights are stationed about it, in our educational and industrial wakefulness, to show its shame, and because the practical tendencies of the time force upon materialism a more and more hard and sottish character. In more imaginative periods, romance threw about idolatry at least the graces of fancy, and made it poetical. Now it is either shrewd or stolid. It is the idolatry of the arithmetic, the stock list, and the palate; not of fable and heroism. The noblest element has vanished. It is bare gluttony. If you are going to worship the animal, then return to the inventions of Egyptian and Grecian genius—"the fair humanities of old religion." Give us back at least the simplicity of fetishism *with* its sensuality. Rebuild the Pantheon. Relight the fires on Pagan altars. Repeople the woods with dryads, and the water with nymphs. Anything rather than the gross surfeit of appetite, and the clinking creed of dollars! And if you cannot do that, take it as a sober hint that God's providence does not mean to have materialists in the world at all. Seek something worthier of your humanity.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(c) Many men are distressing themselves, when they think of their trials, by imagining that they have done something wrong, or God never could have sent such afflictions to them personally, or to their household. That is a mistake. There are trials that are simply tests—not punishments; trials of faith and patience—not rods sent to scourge men because they have been doing some particular evil thing. God's people are tried. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The honour is not in the trial; it is in the spirit in which the trial is borne. Take the trial impatiently, with murmuring against God, and we shall be the worse for our trial, the poorer for our suffering. Take the trial as a veiled angel sent by our Father to say things to us which no other messenger could so suitably convey, then even the rod shall be precious to us, and the herald's utterances of God shall have music in them that shall comfort, and revive, and cheer the heart.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) Stand still awhile, and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God! A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head, see it welling up in the cove-

nant of grace, in the eternal purposes of infinite wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fount; it is a very Geyser, leaping aloft in fulness of power; the springs of the sea are not comparable therewith. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love, or measure the depths of infinite grace. Follow now the stream; mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the cross' foot it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash, see how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them, they are made whole! See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wheresoever this stream cometh all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity; these all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with gladsome eye to note the thousand barques of fairest sail, which scud along the mighty river with colours flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity! Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth, but from its lowest deeps, and all along its unruffled bosom, I hear a voice which saith, "Herein is love."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) Freely, that may be lavishly, ungrudgingly, with fulness and overflow, yet without upbraiding. Or, freely may mean without price or tax, without money as the air is given, without price as the sunlight is poured forth. So "freely given to us of God." Why this is most God-like wholly. No good thing doth he withhold from them that walk uprightly. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us *all* things,"—ALL things,—ALL things! "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE SIN OF MOSES.

(Verse 10.)

Introduction—

The facts recorded.

I. What there was sinful in Moses.

1. There was disobedience to the Divine command.

2. There was immoderate heat and passion.

3. There was unbelief

4. It was all publicly done, and so the more dishonouring to God.

II. What we may learn from this tragical story.

1. What a holy and jealous God He is with whom we have to do.

2. The Lord's children need not think it strange if they get abundance to exercise that grace in which they most excel.

3. Let us not be surprised to see or hear the saints failing even in the exercise of that grace wherein they most excel.

4. Never think yourselves secure from falling till ye be at the end of your race.

5. What need we have to guard constantly our unruly passions, and put a bridle on our lips.

6. Though God pardons the iniquity of His servants, yet He will take vengeance on their inventions (Psa. xcix. 8).

7. If God punishes His children thus for falling into the snare, how shall they escape who lay the snare for them?

8. Observe the ingenuousness of the penmen of the Holy Scripture—Moses records his own fault.—*T. Boston.*

THE ROCK AT KADESH, AN EMBLEM OF CHRIST.

(Verse 11, and 1 Cor. x. 4, last clause.)

Jehovah is frequently spoken of by the Sacred Writers as a Rock (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. xxii. 2; Psa. xviii. 2; xxxviii. 1; xxxi. 2; xlii. 9; *et al.*). And St. Paul, referring to the rock at Horeb, and probably to this one at Kadesh also, says, "That Rock was Christ"—*i.e.*, a type of Christ. *This rock is an emblem of Christ—*

I. In its characteristics.

1. *Permanence.* How firm and stable are the rocks! Generations of men come and go; but the grand old cliffs remain. Of all earthly things they are the most abiding. "The Son abideth for ever." "Christ abideth for ever." "He ever liveth to make intercession." "I am alive for evermore." Jesus Christ is the "sure foundation" (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7). (a)

2. *Unchangeableness.* Geologists tell us of changes even in the rocks; but apparently and to the ordinary observer they are immutable. They are the best symbols on the earth of the unchangeable. How unchangeable is our Lord and Saviour! "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

II. In the water which flowed from it.

Christianity and its blessings are frequently compared to pure water in the Bible (comp. Isa. lv. 1; John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38; Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17). There are several points of analogy between this water and Gospel blessings. Both are—

1. *Necessary.* Water is essential to life. Spiritual life is impossible apart from Christ (1 John v. 12). (b)

2. *Pure.* This water was from a cliff, not from a pond; it had been filtered in the hills, and streamed forth pure and bright to the thirsty multitude. The blessings of Christianity are both pure and purifying.

3. *Refreshing.* Mark how water refreshes the parched earth; how it revives the fading, drooping plant or flower; how it re-animates the pilgrim exhausted by thirst. "A Man shall be as rivers of water in a dry place." (Comp. Isa. xxxv. 6, 7; xli. 18; xlv. 3). (c)

4. *Abundant.* (On this and the following points see on verses 2-11). (d)

5. *Free.* (e)

6. *Supernatural.*

7. *Divine.*

Application.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here is simple existence, with no note of beginning or end. Our Lord says not, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am." He claims pre-existence indeed, but He does not merely claim pre-existence; He unveils a consciousness of Eternal Being. He speaks as one on Whom time has no effect, and for Whom it has no meaning. He is the I AM of ancient Israel; He knows no past, as He knows no future; He is unbeginning, unending Being; He is the eternal "Now."—*Canon Liddon*.

(b) Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day, sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land; what would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life; his tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven, and he himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon Him. Now, Jesus Christ is the water of life, and the bread of life, to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him; and as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Life and the food that sustaineth life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are for your souls stored up in Jesus.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Water typifies the Gospel by its refreshment. How different you feel after you get a glass of cool water, or after you have plunged into the bath! On a hot summer day there is nothing that so soon brings you back from a bad temper or a disturbed spirit, and puts you into a happy frame of mind and body; as cold water. Blessed be God for water! I love to hear it fall in the shower and dash in the cascade, and to see it rush from the ice-pitcher into the clear glass. Thank God for water! Clear water! bright water! beautiful water! But I have to tell you there is a better refreshment even than that. There was a time when you were hounded of convictions. Sinai thundered. The wrath of God cried, "Fly!" Justice cried, "Fly!" Your own fears cried, "Fly!" Mercy said, "Come! Come!" and you plunged like a hart into the waterbrooks, and out of that flood your soul came up cool, and clean, and radiant; and you looked around and said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." There came a time of perplexity in your heart. You lost your property. The gold eagles took wings and flew away. Death, like a black hawk, swooped upon the family brood, and the children were gone. You measured your life from groan to groan, from loss to loss, from tear to tear. You said from your distressed spirit, "Oh! that I had wings like

a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." From the depths of your fevered soul you called out, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" As when you have been walking in a thick wood on a hot summer day you heard the dash of fountains, and your spirit was cheered; so, while you were listening for the answer, the promise of God dropped cool and fresh and sparkling from the Throne: "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." You rejoiced at the thought of the fountain. Your fevered soul thrilled with the cool touch, and you cried, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it. Water! cold water! bright water! everlasting water! bursting from the Throne!"—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(d) Water typifies the Gospel because of its abundance. When we pour the water from the pitcher into the glass we have to be careful or the glass will overflow, and we stop when the water has come to the rim. But when God, in summer, pours out His showers, He keeps pouring on, and pouring on, until the grass-blades cry, "Enough!" and the flowers, "Enough!" and the trees, "Enough!" but God keeps pouring on and pouring on until the fields are soaked, and the rivers overflow, and the cisterns are all filled, and the great reservoirs are supplied, and there is water to turn the wheel, water to slake the thirst of the city, water to cleanse the air, water to wash the hemisphere. Abundance! And so with this glorious Gospel. Enough for one; enough for all. Thousands have come to this fountain, and have drank to the satisfaction of their souls. Other thousands will come; and yet the fountain will not be exhausted.

Just after the battle of Antietam, with some of the other members of the Christian Commission, I went down to help look after the wounded; and on the afternoon of a very hot day I came to a pump of water. I saw a soldier, with musket, guarding the pump. I put out my cup, and he filled it about a quarter full with water. I said, "Why do you not fill my cup?" He replied, "Water is scarce! Here is a great army, and we do not know where to get water after this is gone; and I have orders to give no more than that." What a poor supply for a thirsty man on a hot day! But, glory be to God! that in this Gospel fountain there is water enough for all the armies of the earth, and for all the armies of heaven. You cannot drink it dry. I stand this evening offering this Gospel to all who are here, with just as much confidence that there is enough for them as though there were only two or three persons present.—*Ibid.*

(e) Water typifies the Gospel by its freeness. On this hot Sabbath, after the cows break through the alders into the meadow to drink, how much do they pay for that which they

drink? The humming-bird drinks from the wine glass of the honeysuckle. How much is it a glass? There is a tax on the city water, but no tax upon the great rivers that roll in perpetual volume to the sea. How much will the world pay for all the showers that this summer refreshed the cornfields? Nothing. It is free, and so is this glorious gospel. It is free in its pardon, hope, and salvation, to all who will accept it. Here is a man who says, "I will pay for it, or I will not have it. I am

an independent man; and I will give so much to have my soul redeemed. I will endow a college; or I will establish a school; or I will build a church, and in that way purchase my salvation!" Or he says, "I will do some grand, good works; and God, I know, will accept them." God says, "Away with your good works as a purchase for salvation! Take this Gospel for nothing, or never take it. It is free," "Without money and without price" is this Gospel fountain.—*Ibid.*

THE SINS OF HOLY MEN AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.

(Verses 12, 13.)

The sin of Moses and Aaron seems to have included—

First: *Want of faith.* "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not." "It seems to have been," says Dean Stanley, "a feeling of distrust. 'Can we bring water out of the cliff?' (Num. xx. 10; LXX. *μη ἐξάξομεν*, 'surely we cannot') The smiting of the cliff twice does not indicate the calmness of faith, but the presence of doubt rather, "as if the promise of God 'would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part.'" There was not, we believe, positive unbelief or distrust of the Divine word; but, on the other hand, there was not the full assurance of faith which they should have manifested.

Second: *Irritation of spirit.* The impatience of Moses is manifest in his speech,—“Hear now, ye rebels;” and in his action,—“He smote the rock twice.” Worn out by the repeated and aggravating perversities of the people, the man of God breaks down, and for a moment his long patience is overborne by petulance. (Comp. *Psa. cvi. 32, 33*).
(a)

Third: *Departure from Divine directions.* (1) They fell short of the Divine orders in not speaking to the cliff. “Speak ye unto the cliff before their eyes,” said the Lord; but they did not do so. (2) They went beyond the Divine directions in speaking to the people, and smiting the rock. The directions of God never exceed His requirements. If His commands are particular and in detail, He requires that

our obedience also shall be particular and in detail.

Fourth: *Assumption of power.* The question, “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” does not give honour to God. It is such as they might have asked if by their own unaided efforts they were about to obtain water for the people.

Fifth: *The publicity of the whole.* “Ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” It was an aggravation of their offence that it was committed in the presence of the assembled congregation. They occupied an eminent position; they were the representatives of Jehovah to the people, the eyes of the people were fixed upon them; they should therefore have been more careful to honour God before the people. On a former occasion Moses had been guilty of unbelief towards God (*chap. xi. 22, 23*), and God rebuked him for his sin. That however was in private; while this was in public, and accordingly meets with severer punishment from the Lord.

The text leads us to consider—

I. The liability of the good to sin.

Moses was one of the holiest and noblest men that ever lived, yet here he sins against God. “In him there was a rare combination of intellectual and moral excellences. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. It stands out in bold and impressive relief. His was a noble heart; one purer or truer never beat within a human bosom.

Noble by nature, he was nobler still by the height and force of his virtue." But he was not infallible ; while he remained in this world he was exposed to temptation, and liable to fall into sin. And under the strain of the provocation of these perverse and rebellious people, he did, alas ! fall into sin. Let the great and good be warned. You are safe only as you exercise constant watchfulness, humility, and trust in God. (*b*)

II. The danger of good men failing in those excellences which most distinguish them.

Moses was pre-eminent for meekness (chap. xii. 3) ; but here his meekness fails, and he is petulant and stern. Abraham was celebrated for his faith in God (Rom. iv. 11 ; Gal. iii. 9) ; yet upon two occasions his faith failed for a time (Gen. xii. 12 ; xx. 2, 11-13). Elijah was one of the most fearless and heroic of men ; yet he fled from the threatened vengeance of Jezebel in a very panic of alarm, and remained for some time in a state of deep dejection (1 Kings xix. 1-4, 10, 14). Peter was unquestionably courageous ; yet the charges of a maid-servant reduced him for a time to an utter coward (Luke xxii. 55-60). Guard well the strong points of your character ; for there the greatest danger often is. This seems paradoxical ; nevertheless it is true. The points of our character which we know are weak we watch and fortify ; in our strong points we feel so secure that we deem it unnecessary to exercise vigilance concerning them ; and this sense of security leads us sometimes to fail in those strong points—in those virtues which are most fully ours. (*c*)

III. The impartiality of the administration of the Divine government.

Moses and Aaron were both greatly honoured of God—Moses especially so ; yet God punishes them for sin, as well as others. "Because ye believed not Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I gave them." Surely, this was no slight punishment. After all

their brilliant and fondly-cherished hopes of possessing the "good land," after all they had done and borne as leaders of the rebellious people, the honour of leading them into the land shall not be theirs ; they shall not even enter therein. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." If a saint of God violate His laws, he must bear the penalties which he has incurred. The dark crimes which stained the spirit and life of the man after God's own heart never ceased to trouble him in after days. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." (*d*)

IV. The great guilt of those who by their wickedness occasion sin in the good.

If Moses and Aaron be "thus punished that sin by other men's occasions, how much more shall they be punished that are the occasions, or give the occasions ! Moses and Aaron had never thus offended had the people not murmured ; and many a sin should be daily uncommitted did not some allure, tempt, and provoke, or by some means give occasion thereof."—*Babington*.

"Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." He who not only sins himself, but by temptation or otherwise occasions sin in others, shall be "beaten with many stripes."

V. The means which God uses to deter men from sin.

"This is the water of Meribah ; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." The name was changed from Kadesh-barnea to Meribah-kadesh as a memorial of the sin of the people, and of Moses and Aaron, that others might take warning and shun sin. Many are the means which God uses to keep man from sin ; memorials of human sins and Divine judgments, expostulations with the sinner, warnings against sin, encouragements and aids to obedience, are all so employed. By the voice of history, by the Law from Sinai, by the Gospel of His Son, by the Cross of Jesus Christ, by the influences of His Spirit, God is ever crying to the sinner,

"Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

Application.

Let Christians guard against temptation; let them cultivate a watchful and

prayerful spirit. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Be sober, be vigilant," &c. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If anger arises in thy breast, instantly seal up thy lips, and let it not go forth; for like fire when it wants vent, it will suppress itself. It is good in a fever to have a tender and smooth tongue; but is better that it be in anger; for if it be rough and distempered, there it is an ill sign, but here it is an ill cause. Angry passion is a fire, and angry words are like breath to fan them together; they are like steel and flint, sending out fire by mutual collision.—*Jeremy Taylor*.

(b) Humanity has its weaker side, and when assailed by temptation and the force of evil, is liable to yield, and thus to be overcome. No degree of moral excellence or of spiritual attainment places us beyond the possibility of declension. Imperfection and error attach to us so long as we are in the flesh, and through the weakness and the waywardness of our nature, our highest joys may be marred and limited. If our will could be brought into perfect harmony with the will of God—if we were at all times to move and act in strict conformity with the Revelation of His infinite mind—if there were no contrariety between our inclination and His revealed intimations, deep, and full, and inexpressible would be our joy. It is when our will comes into opposition to His will—it is when we deviate and depart from that which He has prescribed, that our conduct becomes a source of disquietude; and the consciousness that we have preferred our own line of action to the Divinely-prescribed method not only introduces a great disturbing element into our nature, but robs us of purer joy and profounder peace.—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

Human nature has never been perfect in all its qualities, energies, and services; the perfection of human nature can be wrought out only by long-continued and severe probation. In choosing instruments for the representation of His will and the execution of His purposes, God has always chosen men who were best fitted on the whole for such ministry, though in some particulars they have disastrously and pitifully failed.

Consider, knowing human nature as we do, how beneficial a thing it was to the great men themselves to be shown now and again that they were imperfect, and that they were only great and strong as they were good, as they were true to God. To be an illustrious leader, to have power and authority amongst men, always to be in high places, and to be absolutely without a fault of disposition, temper, or desire, is enough to tempt any man to think

that he is more than a man; and even to be without actual social fault, that can be pointed out and blamed, is not unlikely to give a man a false notion of the real state of his own nature. We may learn quite as much from our failures as from our successes. I have seen more truly what I am by my faults than by my graces, and never have I prayed with so glowing a fervour as when I have seen that there is but a step between me and death and that I have nearly taken it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) Abraham, the great man and prophet of the Lord, shows his littleness by giving way to a cowardly fear that strangely divided his heart with the noblest faith found in the ancient world. His fear in one direction was simply ridiculous and pitiful; when he came amongst a powerful people he was always afraid that they would kill him in order to get possession of his wife. On the face of it the thing would seem to be incredible: here is a man who left his kindred and his father's house, who braved the hardships of the wilderness, who arose and pursued kings and slew them, and delivered the prey from the hand of the mighty, tottering like a weak old coward when he thinks that he may be killed. He made a mean figure before Pharaoh, and he makes a meaner still before Abimelech. In one sense I am glad that Abraham made such a fool of himself; for had he been without flaw or blemish, perfect and invincible in faith, and complete in the sanctification of his character, he would have awed me by his supernatural respectability, and I should never have thought of him as an example or a pattern.—*Ibid.*

(d) The punishment of sin is impartial. There is a form of self-deception common to us all, and especially in youth, by which we admit the general law, but try to shirk its personal, its individual, application. It is the old, old story of Eden over and over again in the case of every one of us—the serpent creeping up to us, all glitter and fascination—all dulcet whisper and sinuous lies, and saying to us, "See how fair the fruit is: how much to be desired! Be as God, knowing good and evil. Thou shalt not surely die." And so the boy and the youth—aye, and in his folly the grown man too, believes that it shall not be so with him; that he will repent; that he is the darling of Providence; that he is the favourite of heaven—he the one who shall sin and shall not suffer. If others handle pitch they shall be defiled. If others take fire into their bosom

they shall be burnt; but God will indulge him. And the very spirits of evil laugh at each one going as an ox to the slaughter, when they dupe him into the fancy that, out of special regard for him, that adamant chain of moral gravitation, more lasting and binding than that by which the stars are held in their spheres, will be snapped; that sin, for him only, will change its nature, and at his approach the Gehenna of punishment be transformed into a garden of delight. Is it so, my brethren? Has there ever been any human being yet, since time began, however noble, however beautiful, however gifted, however bright with genius or radiant with fascination, who has sinned with impunity? Ah, no! God is no respecter of persons. Fire burns and water drowns, whether the sufferer be a worthless villain or whether it be a fair and gentle child. And so the moral law works, whether the sin-

ner be a David or a Judas, whether he be a publican or a priest.—*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*

(e) A child would generally stand on its feet in a gust of wind if he knew it was coming; but when the wind happens to come round a corner furiously, he may be taken off his feet. Mind you are well ballasted by prayer every morning before your vessel puts out to sea, or carrying the quantity of sail you do, you may be blown out upon the waves to your perpetual shipwreck. Watch constantly against those things which are thought to be no temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow, and when Cleopatra would have an asp to poison herself, it was brought in a basket of fair flowers. Beware of arrows shot from a golden bow, or by a woman's hand. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

SIN IN THE CHILD OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

The text gives us the reason why Moses and Aaron were kept from going into the land of Canaan, and it suggests to us some lessons about *Sin in the child of God*. God's people sin. Not a sinless character in the Bible, but Christ. No Perfectionism on earth taught there. Sin in the child of God is—

I. Very painful to God.

There is a tone of intense grief in the text. God hates sin in all; but most of all in His own children. Our own child falling into sin, and a mere acquaintance doing so—how differently we should feel in the one case from what we should in the other! Nothing hurts God more than sin in His own children.

II. Most inexcusable.

Speaking strictly, no sin can be excused. Sin is a crime, not a misfortune; so there can be no sufficient excuse for it. This is emphatically true of the child of God; he has a higher knowledge of duty; he has experienced the evil of sin, and felt its sting; he has a new principle—the Divine life within him struggling against sin; he has God to help him—a God who is ever accessible, &c. God speaks in the text as if Moses and Aaron had nothing whatever to palliate their conduct.

III. Most disastrous in its results.

God's name is dishonoured—brought into disrepute. The text shows that God entrusts His character to the keeping of His people. We have to sanctify Him before men; and in the proportion in which we sin we fail to do so. We are the world's Bible; they learn of God through us; they too often estimate Him from our life. No one can tell the injury which is done by inconsistent professors of religion! The weak stumble; the wicked are encouraged in their sins; the worldly have false impressions of God and His religion. It is an awful thing for a Christian to sin.

IV. Very certain of punishment.

"Be sure your sin will find you out:" this is true of the child of God. His sin will give him pain. None of us shall sin with impunity. Moses was the friend of God (Exod. xxxiii. 11), yet God could not pass by his sin. God's love to us does not blind Him to our faults. There is no weakness in Him towards His children, as there is often in us in our dealings with ours. He has ever visited His people for their sin; and sometimes, as in the text, though He may forgive, they have to suffer for the sin as long as they remain upon earth. The text tells us that sin is a hard and

bitter thing in the child of God. Let this incident—

1. *Make God's people more watchful.*
2. *Lead others to ponder their ways;*
for if God visits His own children for

sin, *a fortiori*, He will not let the wicked escape.

3. *Let none forget that God can forgive sin—all sin—through Jesus Christ.*—
David Lloyd.

A REASONABLE REQUEST AND AN UNGENEROUS REFUSAL.

(Verses 14-21.)

We have in this paragraph—

I. A reasonable request.

"We are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: let us pass," &c. This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself.* They desired to enter Canaan from the east, crossing the Jordan; and their direct road to the east of the Jordan was through the land of Edom. If they are not permitted to travel by that way, they must take a very circuitous route (chap. xxi. 4). They asked simply for permission to travel "by the king's way," and promised neither to depart from that way into the fields or vineyards, nor to make use of the wells of water without payment for the same. Their request was—

2. *Urged by forcible reasons.* (1) By the relationship existing between them. "Thus saith thy brother Israel." The Israelites and the Edomites were descendants of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. The Israelites desire a renewal of the ancient kindnesses of their ancestors (Gen. xxxiii. 1-15). Brotherhood should promote kindness, increase mutual helpfulness, &c. (a) (2) By the sufferings which the Israelites had endured. "Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us: how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers." The sufferings they had borne at the hand of strangers should have induced their kinsfolk to succour and help them. (3) By the mercies which God had shown to Israel. "And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an Angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt," &c.

The blessings which God had bestowed upon them should have been viewed—

(i.) As an indication that it was His will that others should aid them. His will is binding, &c. (ii.) As an example to encourage others to aid them. (iii.) As an indication of His favour towards them, which suggested that it was to the interest of others to aid them. It is perilous to resist those whom God defends; it is prudent to further their designs, &c. (4) Because Israel would guarantee Edom against any loss. "We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells," &c. (verse 17). "We will go by the highway: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it," &c. (verse 19). To nomad chiefs, rich in flocks and herds, wells of water are a most precious and important property. Kalisch: "The possession of a well in arid regions not unfrequently causes strife and warfare between whole tribes, and the protection of his wells is a prominent object of solicitude to an Arab sheikh." (b) But the Israelites promise to respect these rights of property; and to cause the Edomites no loss or damage. Thus the arguments by which they enforce their request are conspicuously fair and reasonable.

II. An ungenerous refusal.

"And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. . . . And he said, Thou shalt not go through," &c. (vers. 20, 21). This refusal of the Edomites probably arose from—

1. *Fear that if they complied with the request of the Israelites the result might be injurious to them.* They did

not believe the promises made by the Israelites; and they feared "what so great an army once got in might do; they are not usually so easily removed." The fear was not unnatural, &c.

2. *Envy at the growing power of Israel.* The Edomites knew of their deliverance from Egypt; of their victory over the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8-13); of their immense number; and of their pretensions in respect to Canaan (Exod. xv. 14-17); and they were envious of their increasing strength.

3. *Remembrance of the ancient injury inflicted by Jacob upon Esau.* "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited." "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The nearer the relationship between the offender and the offended,

the wider is the breach and the more difficult is the reconciliation. The memory of an injury such as that which Jacob inflicted upon Esau it is perhaps impossible to wipe out; it is handed down from generation to generation, &c. The recollection of that injury imparted resoluteness and severity to the refusal of Edom to grant the request of Israel.

Conclusion.

1. *Learn that no alienation is so wide and bitter as that between brethren or other near relations.* (c)

2. *Where such alienation exists, let us seek to bring about reconciliation—a complete healing of the breach.* (d)

3. *Cultivate brotherly kindness.*

4. *Respect the rights of others even when the assertion of those rights is carried to an extreme.* "Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; wherefore Israel turned away from him."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Two days after the terrible battle of Chickamanga, I was passing over the battle-field. In a thick clump of bushes, on the side of a ravine, I saw a young man seated beside a tree with his arm bandaged. Seeing that his arm was badly wounded, I asked why he had not gone to the hospital in the rear. He replied, pointing to a corpse that lay near by, "That is my brother; and I am determined never to leave him until he is buried." I had the dead man buried, and the wounded brother taken care of.—*Memphis Advocate*, quoted in *Dict. of Illust.*

(b) The special necessity of a supply of water in a hot climate has always involved among the Eastern nations questions of property of the highest importance, and sometimes given rise to serious contention. To give a name to a well denoted a right of property, and to stop or destroy one once dug was a military expedient, a mark of conquest or an encroachment on territorial right claimed or existing in its neighbourhood. Thus the well Beersheba was opened, and its possession attested with special formality by Abraham (Gen. xxi. 30, 31). In the hope of expelling Isaac from their neighbourhood, the Philistines stopped up the wells which had been dug in Abraham's time and called by his name, an encroachment which was stoutly resisted by the followers of Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 15-33; see also 2 Kings iii. 19; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10). The Kuran notices abandoned wells as signs of desertion

(Sur. xxii.). To acquire wells which they had not themselves dug, was one of the marks of favour foretold to the Hebrews on their entrance into Canaan (Deut. vi. 11). To possess one is noticed as a mark of independence (Prov. v. 15), and to abstain from the use of wells belonging to others, a disclaimer of interference with their property (Num. xx. 17, 19; xxi. 22). Similar rights of possession, actual and hereditary, exist among the Arabs of the present day. Wells, Burekhardt says, in the interior of the desert, are exclusive property, either of a whole tribe, or of individuals whose ancestors dug the wells. If the well be the property of a tribe, the tents are pitched near it, whenever rain water becomes scarce in the desert; and no other Arabs are then permitted to water their camels. But if the well belongs to an individual, he receives presents from all strange tribes who pass or encamp at the well, and refresh their camels with the water of it. The property of such a well is never alienated; and the Arabs say that the possessor is sure to be fortunate, as all who drink of the water bestow on him their benedictions (comp. Num. xxi. 17, 18; Judg. i. 15).—*H. W. Phillott, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(c) We see by lamentable experience, that every toy and trifle maketh debate, not only between dearest friends, but between nearest kinsfolk, that they can never be reconciled. And as no band knitteth faster, and bindeth closer than this, while love and liking lasteth;

so no contention is so bitter, no hatred so deadly, as that of brethren and others that are near in blood, when the knot is broken and dissolved. The tender glass when it is once broken, will never be set together again. No water proveth so exceeding cold as that which was once heated exceeding hot; so no hatred proveth like to the hatred of brethren, which are often found merciless one toward another, and such as can never be appeased; as we see in the malice of Cain toward Abel. This it is that Solomon pointeth out in Prov. xviii. 19: "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and their contentions are as a bar of a castle." For as they loved most entirely and dearly before, so when once they grow enemies, they hate one another most extremely, whose hearts are as stony walls that cannot be pierced, and as bars of iron that cannot be broken. Now as the Prophet teacheth, that it is a "good and comely thing for brethren to dwell together in unity;" so it is a noisome and unnatural thing to behold greatest envy and most mortal malice, where the greatest and nearest bands of kindred should knit together.—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) A day of reconciliation! A family made one. Brethren coming together again after long separation. It is a beautiful picture. Why should it not be completed, when it needs completion, in our own day amongst ourselves? Ministers sometimes have misunderstandings, and say unkind things about one another, and exile one another from love and confidence for years. Is there never to be a day of reconciliation and Christian forgetfulness of wrong, even when positive wrong has been done? Families and households often get awry. The younger brother differs from his eldest bro-

ther; sisters fall out. One wants more than belongs to him; another is knocked to the wall because he is weak; and there comes into the heart bitterness and alienation; and often brothers and sisters never have a kind word to say about one another. Is it always to be so? Don't merely make it up, don't patch it up, don't cover it up; go right down to the base. You will never be made one, until you meet at the Cross, and hear Him say, "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." It is in Christ's sorrow that we are to forget our woes, in Christ's sacrifice that we find the answer to our sin, in Christ's union with the Father that we are to find all true and lasting reconciliation. But who is to begin? That is the wonderful question that is often asked us. Who is to begin? One would imagine that there were some very nice people about who only wanted somebody to tell them who was to begin. They want to be reconciled, only they don't know *who* is to begin. I can tell you, *You are!* That is exactly how it is. But I am the eldest,—yes, and *therefore* ought to begin. But I am the youngest. Then why should the youngest be an obstinate, pig-headed child? Who are you that you should not go and throw yourself down at your brother's feet and say, "I have done you wrong, pardon me"? Who is to begin? You! Which? Both! When? Now! Oh! beware of the morality which says, "I am looking for the opportunity, and if things should so get together—" Sir! death may be upon you before you get to the end of your long melancholy process of self-laudation and anti-Christian logic.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE DEATH OF AARON.

(Verses 22-29.)

Let us notice—

I. The death of Aaron.

Concerning the death of this distinguished man there are three things which we may profitably consider. (a) He died—

1. *As a consequence of sin.* His death was not the result of disease, or of the exhaustion of the vitality of his body. It is true that he was an aged man; "Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in Mount Hor;" yet he died not by reason of old age and its infirmities; his death was not in the ordinary course of nature; but was a direct consequence of sin. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the

land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against My Word at the water of Meribah." He is distinctly called "the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16); yet now he must die because of his sin, without entering the Promised Land, without even beholding it. God is rigidly impartial in His dealings with His creatures. "There is no respect of persons with God." If His people sin, they must suffer for their sin.

2. *By the appointment of God.* There was nothing accidental in the death of Aaron; everything connected with it was arranged by the Lord. He determined the *time* of his death. "Is there not an appointed time to man

upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." "My times are in Thy hand." The Lord determined the *place* of his death. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; . . . and Aaron shall die there." The *circumstances* of his death were also arranged by the Lord. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments," &c. Nothing is left to accident, or chance, or human choice; all was Divinely appointed. Our Lord hath "the keys of Hades and of death." His people cannot die prematurely or accidentally. All who seek to live in harmony with His will, all who are moving in the line of His purposes, pass hence in accordance with His arrangements. (b)

3. The death of Aaron was his *introduction to life and to congenial society*. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." "Aaron, though he dies for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease and in honour. He is not 'cut off from his people,' as the expression usually is concerning those that die by the hand of Divine justice, but he is 'gathered to his people,' as one that died in the arms of Divine grace." The expression "gathered unto his people" suggests two ideas:—(1) Death is the way to life. The expression under consideration cannot be a mere poetical phrase for death; for in many places it is specified over and above the fact of death (see Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33; ver. 26; Deut. xxxii. 50). Nor can the expression relate to burial; for in this sense it would not be true of Aaron, nor yet of Abraham, to whom it was also applied, nor yet of Moses.

Besides which the fact of burial is in many places specified over and above the being "gathered unto his people" (see Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8, 9; xxxv. 29; 1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43, &c.). "The only assignable sense, therefore, is," as Dean Alford says, "that of reference to a state of further personal existence beyond death; and the expression thus forms a remarkable testimony to the Old Testament belief in a future state." When Aaron died he did not cease to be; but rather entered upon a larger, intenser, fuller life. When his lifeless body lay upon Mount Hor, his living spirit passed to the great assembly of the good in the presence of God. At death the body "returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." (2) Death is the way to congenial social life. "Gathered unto his people." Aaron at death passed neither into isolation nor into the uncongenial society of strangers or aliens; but to his own people, to persons of kindred sympathies and purposes and interests. After death men go to their own place, and to their own company. The good pass swiftly to their "Father's house," and to the great multitude who are gathered there. O, death is not terrible to the good! It is the way by which they pass to the holy and blessed fellowship of glorified saints, the way to our permanent and joyous home, the way to the presence of our God. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

II. The appointment of Aaron's successor.

"Strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. . . . And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." The sacred high-priestly vestments were taken off Aaron before his death, that they might not be defiled by contact with the dead. By putting them upon Eleazar, he was invested with the office to which they belonged. In this arrangement I discover—

1. *Kindness to Aaron*. It assured him—(1) That his office would be filled; that his work would be carried

on, &c. Interested in the religious welfare of the people as he was, this must have been cheering to him. (2) That this office would be filled by his own son; that the high-priesthood would continue in his own family. This must have been a gratification to the fatherly instincts of his nature.

2. *A guarantee of the continuance of the Church of God.* Aaron dies; but God has a successor at hand to take Aaron's place and to carry on his work. Moses dies leaving his great work incomplete, but Joshua, a brave and noble man, is ready to take up the great leader's enterprize, and carry it onward to a triumphant close. The whirlwind carries the faithful and heroic Prophet of Horeb, as on the wings of some swift and strong angel, to his well-earned rest; but Elisha, a worthy successor even of so distinguished a servant of the Lord, waits to catch the falling of his master's mantle and to prosecute his master's mission. And now, good and faithful ministers are gathered to their fathers; but the Lord Christ ever lives, and ever raises up worthy successors to fill the vacant places. The continuance of the Church depends not upon the services of even its most gifted and holy ministers, but upon its Divine Head. This is—(1) Humbling to our pride. God can carry on His work without our poor services. Our place will soon be filled by another, and perhaps better filled than it ever was by us. (2) Encouraging to our faith. The work so dear to us will be carried on when we have passed away. Though the human workers die, the Divine Master and Supreme Worker ever lives, and ever carries forward His cause towards its final triumph.

III. The mourning because of Aaron's death.

"And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." This national mourning suggests—

1. *The worth of faithful ministers.* Aaron had rendered valuable services to the Israelites; he had rendered essen-

tial service in the work of their emancipation from Egyptian bondage; he had entreated God again and again for them in their rebellions; he had stood between the more than fourteen thousand dead, and the living, and by his intercession stayed the progress of the dreadful plague. But now he has gone: he will serve them no more. Well may they weep. The loss of faithful ministers is one of the greatest losses that can befall society. They render the most valuable services, they exercise the most salutary and inspiring influence in society. (d)

2. *The appreciation of blessings when they are withdrawn from us, which were not valued when they were ours.* While Aaron was with them the Israelites "were often murmuring against him, threatening indeed to kill him, wishing that there was an end of him, speaking against him, and in every way discouraging him in his work. But when he was dead they mourned for him; they found their loss when it was too late to value him. This is but an example of human nature. We very seldom value our chiefest blessings until we are made to feel their worth by the loss of them. It has often happened in the case of the Christian minister and congregation, that he has been undervalued while he was testifying God's truth, and has been much mourned for when taken away." (Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33).

"Like birds whose beauties languish, half-conceal'd
Till mounted on the wing, their glossy
plumes
Expanded, shine with azure, green, and
gold;
How blessings brighten as they take their
flight!"—*Young.*

Shakspeare also gives luminous expression to this truth:—

"It so falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth,
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours."

Let us appreciate the gifts of Heaven while we have them, &c.

In conclusion, learn—

1. *The universality of death.* The

gifted, the great, the beautiful, the holy, all die. We must die. Let us live that death shall be to us great gain. (e)

2. The imperfection of the Aaronic

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Behold then the three persons, Aaron, Moses, and Eleazar, going up the mountain. The first is distinguished by his priestly habit. He is clad in the mitre, the ephod, the fine linen, the Urim and the Thummim, and those bells, which formerly when heard within the holy of holies told of his life, now seem sounding the signal for Death to meet him on the summit, and their tinkle lessening up the mountain strikes like a death-watch in the ear of the people of the great congregation assembled before their tents to trace the progress and to witness the event, not a murmur or groan heard throughout them all, but millions, it may be, weeping in silence. See with what calm, majestic, uninterrupted and un-reverted steps the three pursue their journey, talking perhaps of that Promised Land which one of them is never to see, which another is to see from a mountain in Moab, and which the third only is to enter, or talking of that Better Country to which the first is so near. Mark the eager look cast forward by Aaron toward the top of the hill, as if he expected the Angel of Death to be waiting for him there; but when he gains the summit, lo! all is empty and sternly silent, the victim is there but no wood and no fire for the offering; one mighty sacrificer has arrived, but the other is not yet come to keep the dread engagement. Turn then ere he comes, and see from the mount ten thousand times ten thousand torn, ruptured, rent, serrated and savage hills standing up as witnesses to the covenanted meeting and catastrophe at hand; not a blade of grass or drop of water in view, nothing but a bare and blasted wilderness of sand and stone, and thunder-split crag, as if a flood of fire had crossed, and torn, and tortured it into the similitude of hell: including the vast valley of Arabah which unites the Red and the Dead Seas, both of which are visible, and on its western side the great sandy desert, surmounted in the extreme distance by the Sinaitic range. Mark the last glance cast by Aaron to the camp and the multitude far below, a glance speaking of sorrow and of remorse too, since it is owing to his sin at Moribah that he is dying so soon, and dying so publicly, but speaking still more of submission, confidence, and hope in the mercy of God. See the slow and solemn manner in which the hand of Moses, although the younger brother, tenderly, like a mother her babe at eventide, strips Aaron of his garments. And behold now the high priest clothed only with his long grey hair, as is that ardent sun over-head with his old beams, laying himself down

priesthood (see Heb. vii. 11, 18, 19, 23, 28; viii. 7; ix. 25; x. 1-4, 11).

3. *The perfection of the Priesthood of Christ* (see Heb. vii. 22-28; viii. 6; ix. 23-28; x. 10-14).

upon the hill, watching with an eye of love and pride his son Eleazar, as Moses arrays him with ephod, and linen, and breast-plate, and mitre; and as the bright rays from the Urim and Thummim flash for the last time upon his dim and dying eye, blessing his noble son whose ornament they are henceforward to be, and blessing the brother with whom he has so long held sweet counsel and united in marvellous achievement; and then fixing his look upward as if waiting for the advent and the dart of his adversary, who comes not; but instead there is heard a "still, small voice," saying, "Come up hither," and lo! a dead body lies on the granite of Mount Hor, and a living soul, suddenly clothed by the hands of angels with robes that shall never be stripped away, has joined the great assembly in the heavens.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) We strive, oftentimes almost unconsciously perhaps, to re-arrange or re-ordain particular circumstances, and even whole scenes in our life and in the lives of others. And with a still more importunate and sorrowful eagerness do we seek to have some power in arranging for life's close. We would not dare to take the key of death in our own hand, but we would touch it while it lies in His. *Not now, or not there, or not thus, we are always saying.*

"Not now," we say, when the father is called to leave the family of which he is the whole stay. "Let him live. let a few weeks elapse, let his family be provided for, let his work be done!" It is done, is the answer, His fatherless children are provided for; I have taught him to leave them with Mo. "The Father of the fatherless, the Husband of the widow, is God in His holy habitation."

"Not now," we say, when the mother has heard the home-call, and with a calmness and courage greater than those of the soldier in battle, is rising above all her cares, and becoming a child again, at the threshold of the heavenly home. "Oh, not now! Who will check the waywardness, encourage the virtues, receive the confidences, soothe the little sorrows, and train the loves of those infant hearts? Who will teach the evening prayer, and listen to the Sabbath hymn? Who can give a mother's care, and feel a mother's love?" "I," saith the Shepherd, "I will gather the lambs with mine arm, and carry them in My bosom. I will forget no prayer of the dying mother's heart. I will treasure in My heart the yearnings of her life over her children, and the unutterable compassions of her dying hour; and when many years have

sped, and she has been long in heaven, these children will remember her in their holiest and happiest moments, and by their walk and their work will be proving that she did not live in vain, that she 'finished the work that was given her to do.'

Or, we say, "*Not there, oh, not there! away on the sea—a thousand miles from land—let him not die there, and be dropped into the unfathomed grave, where the unstable waves must be his only monument, and the winds the sole mourners of the place! Or not in some distant city or far-off land—strangers around his bed, strangers closing his eyes, and then carrying him to a stranger's grave. Let him come home and die amid the whisperings and breathings of the old unquenchable love.*" "*He is going home,*" is the answer, "and going by the best and only way. I can open the gate Beautiful in any part of the earth or sea. I can set up the mystic ladder, the top of which reaches to heaven, in the loneliest island, at the furthest ends of the earth, and your friends will flee to the shelter of *My* presence all the more fully because yours is far away."

Or, we say, "*Not thus, not through such agonies of body, or faintings of spirit, or tremblings of faith—not in unconsciousness—not without dying testimonies. Let there be outward as well as inward peace. Let mention be made of Thy goodness. Let there be foretellings and foreshadowings of the glory to which, as we trust, they are going. Oh, shed down the light, the fragrantcy of heaven upon their dying bed!*" The answer is, "They are there, and you are so dull of sense that you perceive them not. Your friend is filled with the 'peace that passeth understanding,' and safe in the everlasting arms."

Thus, brethren, the *time*, and the *place*, and the *circumstances*, are all arranged by the wisdom and the will of Him who holds the keys, and we could not, even if we had our own will and way, make anything better than it is in the perfect plan. Better! everything would be worse—inconceivably worse if *we* had the keys. Let us trust them, with a loyal loving trust, with Him who graciously says to us, "Fear not;" One who, in this as in all other things, will treat us and give us according to our faith.—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) Death is but a going home. A child is away at school, and the vacation is near at hand; and you may be sure that the father and mother long to see the child more than the child wants to see father and mother. So, according to the good old custom, the father takes the carriage, and wends his way to the school, perhaps with, perhaps without, intimations to the child of his coming. In the midst of his tasks on the last day, the child is suddenly greeted by the voice and presence of his father; and no sooner are the first salutations exchanged than the father says, "Are your things ready? We go to-morrow." Wine is not so sparkling as the joy in the child's heart. He can neither eat,

nor sleep, nor play. The thought that his father has come, and that he is going home to see his mother, and brothers, and sisters, has quite intoxicated him. By such glorious images as this God is pleased to represent our departure from the present life. The Lord Jesus Christ shall come to our poor old weather-beaten school-house in this world, and say to us, "Come home! you are wanted."

Heaven is not, then, a great bleak shore to which you are driven by the storm, and where you are cast among savage inhabitants. Heaven is a blessed place of rest. It is your home. You have friends there, the chiefest among whom is He that loved you, that gave Himself for you, that has ever watched over you during your earthly pilgrimage, and that soon, very soon, will come for you, as already He has for yours. They are glorious there; and in all their glory, if they could but speak a word to us, would it be such a poor stumbling word as that which they spoke in the hour of death? If they could speak to us from the eternal world, what hope and consolation would they give us!—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Death is, in every case, an event of most momentous consequences. . . . But the death of a minister of the Gospel, in addition to the consequences which affect his own destiny, involves others which extend to his flock. If he has been faithful unto death, his decease is in mercy to himself, but it must at the same time be in judgment to his church. The testimony of a witness for God to an unbelieving generation is finished—a herald of salvation is withdrawn—an ambassador of Christ is recalled—a light of the world, which has guided many, and might have guided more, into the haven of eternal peace, is extinguished. It is not the death of a friend merely, however valued, or a relative, however dear, whose affection soothed the sorrows of time, and softened the rugged path of life; but it is the removal of one whose solicitude watched for the soul, promoted its salvation, and diffused, or aimed to diffuse, a beneficial influence over its eternal existence. What arithmetic can estimate the greatness of such a calamity? Instead of that living voice which, both by the eloquence of preaching, and the still holier and more elevating eloquence of prayer, often lifted the rapt hearers to heaven, and matured them for its glories, they have nothing now but the cold and silent marble, which perpetuates, with his honoured name, their own incalculable loss.—*J. Angell James.*

(e) All must die. The fact is so old and every day, that, like the sun, few people think of it or look at it. It is otherwise, indeed, with those who see the solemn reality approaching themselves, and who then, for the first time, feel its strangeness, its importance, its awfulness, and how little prepared they are for it. They resemble one who has fallen asleep on a railway, and, starting up, sees the engine just upon him, and has hardly time,

by one wild cry, to commend himself to the mercy of God, ere he is crushed into non-existence. Something like this was the cry of Hoffman, the German writer, who, when after a thoughtless career he felt himself approaching his end, and was told to prepare for death, turned his face away and said, "*And must I at last begin to think about God?*" Truly says his biographer, "Sorrowfuller words were never spoken by man." Far from

us be it to say that these cries are never answered—we believe that, when sincere, they always are. But, alas! how foolish to delay their utterance! how foolish to expect that there shall always be time given to utter them! and how much wiser to close with Christ's offer of mercy now, and now, ere it be too late, to begin to think seriously, lovingly, prayerfully, and hopefully of God!—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT.

(Verses 23-29.)

I. The common destiny of man.

"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." At death the body is gathered to the generations that are gone. One generation is buried in the dust of another, and future generations will be entombed in our dust. When one thinks of this, how worthless appear all the mere secular distinctions of this world! There are "kings and counsellors of the earth," &c. (Job. iii. 14, 15, 19). Thither you and I are going. But not as to a final resting place. This Bible assures me that all that ever have left us are living now—thinking, active, conscious; and that the good who are living are living in the conscious presence of Infinite Love—in the heaven of the blest. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13)

II. The rigorousness of moral law.

Aaron was to die. Why? Because of a certain something which took place at Meribah, Moses and Aaron were both excluded from the Promised Land. The law demands punishment for sin even in a good man. Moral law seems to be as immutable as God Himself. Aaron went up into Mount Hor, and there he died. And his death proclaims in thunder the fact that however distinguished a man may be for his excellencies, however high he may be in the Church of God, his sin shall not go unpunished.

III. The termination of life in the midst of labour.

The work entrusted to Moses and Aaron was to conduct the children of Israel through the wilderness into the

Promised Land; and this work was unfinished. We nearly all die with our work unfinished. The farmer dies when he has only half ploughed his field; the merchant dies, &c. We are not surprised when an old tree, though prolific in its day, dies, for it dies by the law of decay; nor are we astonished that an unfruitful tree should be cut down, for it is a cumberer of the ground; but we are astonished that a tree, with its branches full of sap, with its boughs laden with fruit, with thousands reposing under its shadow, should be struck with a thunderbolt from heaven. "Thy path," O God, "is in the great waters," &c.

IV. God's agency in man's dissolution.

Why did Aaron die? He was not worn out with age. Not because there was disease rankling in his system; not because there was any external violence applied to him. Why, then, did he die? The Great One determines that he shall die, and he dies. This is always the philosophy of a man's death. Philosophy, the Bible, and reason all say, "man dies because the Great One has determined that he should die." If God has determined that the frailest organisation shall live for ever, that organisation will live for ever; and so also, if He determines it, the most robust, the strong and vigorous, dies in a moment (see Job vii. 1; xiv. 5, 20; Psa. xc. 3; Job i. 21).

V. The promptitude with which Providence supplies the places of the dead.

Aaron must die, but there is Eleazar standing by his side ready to step into

his place. This is the order of Providence. A merchant dies, and another man stands by his side ready to carry on his business. A lawyer dies, &c. A statesman dies, &c. A minister leaves a pulpit, his voice becomes silent in death, and the people mourn; but God has another minister standing by ready to step into the place of the departed, and to carry on his work. Oh, how this encourages my faith in the progress of Divine truth in this world!

But it is certainly humbling to our pride. My friend, the world can do without thee. Thou art but a blade in the field; the landscape will bloom without thee.

VI. The trial of human friendships.

Moses and Eleazar were very closely related to Aaron. Moses was more than a brother to Aaron. There was a spiritual kindredship between them. There were mental affinities and spiritual affections. They were devoted to the same great purpose, they had the same plan, they were the children of the same God; and here is their trial—Aaron must die. . . .

Can it be that the great God of love, who has made us to love, and who has disposed us to give our affections to certain persons, should, by our love, make us so often wretched? There is to be a renewal of real spiritual friendship. The separation which takes place in the death of true Christian friends is more in form than in reality. In truth we become more really friends by the death separation. Death cannot destroy our loving memories of them. Death does not kill—nay, it seems but to intensify

our affection. We are one—for ever one.

VII. The painful recognition by society of its greatest losses.

The people “mourned for Aaron thirty days.”

The two greatest blessings on this earth are—the Bible and good men. I need not tell you the value of the Bible, for you know it. Glorious Book for the intellect, for the imagination, for the heart, for the world, for all ages! Blessed be God for the Bible! But next to the Bible, we value good men. Good men are as fountains welling up in the desert through which you are passing; they are lights in abounding darkness; they are salt which counteracts our tendency to corruption. But the Christian minister is the best of all men, and his loss is the greatest of all losses. A man who not only has the spirit of the Bible in him, but who has given his intellect, his genius, his powers of mind to the study of the Word of God, in order to present that Word to all classes of men, dealing out a word in season to each—a word of advice to the enquiring, of counsel to the thoughtless, of caution to the young, of comfort and help to the poor and suffering—I know of no man who is rendering such a service to society and to humanity as he. Such a man was Aaron. He was more; he was an orator. God says, “My servant Aaron can speak well.” But he dies. His eloquent tongue is silent in death; and they wept thirty days.—*David Thomas, D.D. Abridged from “The Christian World,” March 28th, 1861.*

THE REMOVAL OF A DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD.

(Verses 25-29.)

In this death there were—

I. The express appointment and arrangement of God.

The departure of God's servants is never accidental or unforeseen.

II. The last attentions and ministrations of pious friendship.

Such ministrations and attentions are a privilege to—

1. *Those about to depart.*

2. *Those who for a season are to survive.*

III. The tokens of Divine favour.

In one respect Aaron's death was a sign of Divine displeasure, but this displeasure was only partial. He was allowed to go to the place of his death in his robes of office.

III. The pledge of perpetuity to the Divine cause.

A successor was immediately, authoritatively, and unquestionably secured to the office that Aaron held.

V. The prospect of immortal happiness.

Mount Hor was near enough to permit a vision of Canaan.—*J. Parsons.* From "*The Biblical Museum.*"

THE SORROWS OF BEREAVEMENT.

(Verse 29.)

What an impressive scene is this! a whole nation bowed down by one common grief. The many thousands of Israel are mourning the death of one of the most noble and useful of men.

We too shall soon "be gathered unto our people." Like waves which chase each other to the shore, or like clouds which on the heels of each other fast travel o'er the face of the blue heavens, are we treading in the wake of "the great departed," and soon shall arrive at the solemn bourne of our pilgrimage.

"Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."
—*Longfellow.*

The tears of this vast congregation are sadly suggestive. Let us look into the reasons of the mourning of this nation.

I. A great and good man had been removed from their midst.

"Aaron was dead."

1. He was *a holy man*. The lustre of his life is clouded by a few imperfections and sins; but he was unquestionably a good man. "Aaron, the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16).

2. He was *an eloquent man*. "Aaron the Levite—I know that he can speak well" (Exod. iv. 14). This great gift he had used in the highest service. It had been employed in obtaining the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage; in speaking unto them words of reproof, counsel, instruction, and exhortation; and in speaking unto God on their behalf.

3. *He filled a position of the highest honour and of the greatest importance.*

Under God he was the religious head of this nation. To him was granted to approach nearer to the Most High than any man of that age, except Moses. More than once his intercessions had averted the Divine anger from the guilty people. But at the summons of God he has left them for ever. "Aaron was dead." (a)

II. A great and good man had been removed while toiling for their welfare.

Aaron was not a useless member of this great congregation; he had not become unfit for service; he was fulfilling the important functions of his sacred office. Yet God called him away, and his "purposes were broken off." And still men are called away by God in the midst of service and usefulness. The statesman, the minister, the author, the physician, the parent, are sometimes thus summoned hence. To us there is much mystery in this. We cannot explain it; but we can reverently bow before it. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." (b)

III. A great and good man had been removed when apparently his services could hardly be spared.

To our poor mind it seems that Israel could not afford to lose Aaron. We think that they needed his experience to counsel them, his faith to plead with God for them, his brave spirit to encourage them and to assist in leading them to the Promised Land. But God is independent of even the most distinguished and useful men. When such men are removed, here is our encouragement—God ever lives and works; Christ

ever lives and works ; and "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." (c)

IV. A great and good man had been removed, and in his removal many had parted with a true and loving friend.

In that sorrowing nation, I have no doubt, there were not a few who had found in Aaron a kindred spirit, and rejoiced in the friendship of his affectionate heart. And more than this, Moses was his brother, and Eleazar and Ithamar were his sons. But the brother, the sons, the friends of Aaron, must all take their leave of him for ever in this world. The death of a true friend is one of the sorest sorrows that our hearts are called upon to suffer ; and wrings from us the bitterest tears.

Conclusion.

1. *Prize the friends and the great and*

good men whom God sends amongst us while they are yet with us. Israel did not feel the worth of Aaron until he was taken from them. Let us avoid their error, &c.

2. *Be thankful for Christianity.* It takes the sting and the bitterness from death. It reveals a blessed immortality, and bestows the title to it. (d)

3. *Remember that we too must pass away from this world.* "It is appointed unto men once to die." "Here have we no continuing city."

4. *Live as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* Our home is not here ; our rest is not here. "Our citizenship is in heaven." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. (Matt. vi. 19-21). "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." So death will be great gain.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The world can have no greater or richer boon conferred on it than the gift of a great man. The history of the world is but the history of its great men. God carries on society by such. They are the hinges on which it has turned. They measure whole ages for themselves. They are the mountain summits in the great path of human progress—the most towering landmarks of the past, and the hopes of the future. Such, too, are the princes in Israel—great men who are not the property of a denomination but of the Church, with a breadth and richness of intellect, with a nobleness of character, and a devotion to great principles that cannot be confined to the range of one sect, whose movements stir the whole Church of God, and whose departure leaves a mighty gap. We admire and honour such men wherever we find them. We thank God for every great, noble-hearted, and honest servant of Christ. In proportion as the service rendered by such persons is real and valuable, do we learn to think highly of them, to depend on them, and to feel as if we knew not how their loss is to be supplied.—*John Riddell.*

(b) If we believe in God, in a God of order and wisdom, and especially if we believe in Jesus, the infinite support of our life, we dare not doubt for one moment, that when a great or good man dies, his whole appointed work on earth was done, that Providence had no more for him to do, that all he had to do for the world, or for his family, was completed and summed up. Now a worthy and beloved parent does not cease his influence when he dies ; he rules

his children still, in many cases with mightier power than by his living voice. Well may we feel that he has left such memories and impressions of his views and principles written on their hearts, and now hallowed to perpetual remembrance by the sanctifying power of death, that he, though dead, shall guide them by their very relation to him. Their very love to him indeed must make them mourn ; but still, no loss is irreparable ; no human loss is absolute.—*Ibid.*

(c) Let all this carry up our love, and trust, and loyalty, to Jesus alone. It is the visible mark of inferiority of all others, *that they die.* However great, they are limited in their greatness. They have had but a certain work to do, a limited power to put forth. They could not serve the continuous wants of the world—they do their little work or their great work, and then they are removed. Their longer continuance might turn out a hindrance. It is the unapproachable distinction of Jesus, that He remains for ever the Prince of Peace, the grand Head of the nation, to whom all earthly princes are subject. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Over him death hath no power ; the taint of corruption cannot infect Him. No voice shall bewail His failure, no nation weep His funeral, no cry of a pierced world tell that its hope and star is gone. He liveth and reigneth for ever. He is our refuge still in times of trouble. Friends die and great men disappear from the stage ; but the Saviour remains with sympathy to dry up all our tears, with power to sustain under the loss of earthly supports. As the hearts we cling

to become still, then He opens all His heart to us, and in contact with it our own heart grows still and calm, and learns that, in taking from us the earthly prop. He was but drawing us nearer Himself.—*Ibid.*

(d) Life and immortality have been brought clearly to light in the Gospel—in Him who hath Himself risen “the firstfruits of them that sleep.” And hence the Christian alone looks with cheerful hopefulness in death. Others may face it with steadfastness or calm—he alone lies down to sleep in hope. Not only without fear, but in joy he enters the dark valley, and friends lay him in the narrow prison-house, “dust to dust, in the hope of a joyful resurrection.” “For this corruptible must put on incorruption,” &c. (1 Cor. xv. 53-57).

It is this fact of Resurrection which leads the apostle to say that we who remain alive should not sorrow for our dead ones, “even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13). Why, indeed, should we thus sorrow, who believe that as “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him?” They who had no such faith, might well weep as they buried their Dead out of sight, and knew not whether they should evermore see the light of life. But why should we hopelessly weep for those who are resting with the Lord—who have gone before to be for ever with Him? Why, indeed, but for the faintness of our hearts and the weakness of our flesh? Let us sorrow

rather for ourselves, that our sight is so dim and our faith so dull—that we are so little able to look beyond things which are “seen and temporal” to those which are “unseen and eternal.” The Living, rather than the Dead, may have a claim upon our sorrowful regard. For the Dead have gone beyond our anxiety. They have entered into their rest. They are asleep in Jesus; while the Living, who are around us, and with us, may be wandering far from Him, may be wounding Him by their sins, may be “crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame.” It is as if we were to weep for the child resting in its father’s bosom, sheltered in a happy home, rather than for the child who has gone astray in darkness, and cannot find its homeward way. It is as if we were to sorrow for the mariner who has found a safe harbour, and rests in peace, rather than for the storm-tossed sailor in the open main, around whom the billows may be heaving high, and over whom the sky may be darkening to his doom. No, brethren, let us not sorrow for those who are with God, safe in a Father’s house, sheltered in the haven of eternal rest. But let us be anxious and careful for the living, that we may help them, and guide them by God’s blessing in a right way; and for ourselves, that we may “know the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes.”—*Principal Tulloch, D.D.*

CHAPTER XXI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *King Arad the Canaanite.* Rather, “the Canaanite King of Arad.” Arad was a royal city of the Canaanites (Josh. xii. 14), and was situated on a hill called *Tell Arad*, twenty Roman miles south of Hebron. Of the city nothing remains save some ruins.

Which dwelt in the south. Heb. “in the Negeb.” See on chap. xiii. 17.

By the way of the spies. הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלְלוּכִים, an expression of uncertain meaning. Fuerst says that *Atharim* is the plural of *Athar*, a place, district; and is the “proper name of a place in the south of Palestine.” So also the LXX., A. Clarke, Horsley, Patrick. “But the *Chaldee*, *Samar*, and *Syr.* render it with much greater probability as an appellative noun formed from הָיָר with *N* *prosth.*, and synonymous with

הַתִּירִים, the spies (chap. xiv. 6). The way of the spies was the way through the desert of Zin, which the Israelitish spies had previously taken to Canaan (chap. xiii. 21). The territory of the King of Arad extended to the southern frontier of Canaan, to the desert of Zin, through which the Israelites went from Kadesh to Mount Hor.”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Hormah.* Margin: “utter destruction” (see on chap. xiv. 45). “The seeming inconsistency between Num. xxi. 3, and Judg. i. 17, may be relieved by supposing that the vow made at the former period was fulfilled at the latter, and the name (the root of which הָרַם constantly occurs in the sense of, to devote to destruction, or utterly to destroy) given by anticipa-

tion.”—*Dr. H. Hayman, in Bible Dict.* The Canaanites seem to have resumed possession after the departure of the Israelites, and to have restored the ancient name. It was not until the time of the Judges that the vow, which Moses and the Israelites made at this time, was completely executed.

Verse 4. *And they journeyed from Mount Hor, &c.* The Edomites having refused them a passage through their land, they were compelled to turn their steps towards the Red Sea, and go round the land of Edom. Their way was down the Arabah until they drew near to Akabah (Ezion-Geber, Deut. ii. 8), then “they turned up one of the Wadys on the left, and so made their way by the back of the mountain of Seir to the land of Moab on the east of the Dead Sea.”

The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. Travelling in the Arabah was likely to produce discouragement. Mr. Grove thus writes of it: “The surface is dreary and desolate in the extreme. ‘A more frightful desert,’ says Dr. Robinson, ‘it had hardly been our lot to behold . . . loose gravel and stones everywhere furrowed with the beds of torrents . . . blocks of porphyry brought down by the torrents among which the camels picked their way with great difficulty . . . a lone shrub of the ghûdah the almost only trace of vegetation.’ This was at the ascent from the *Wady el-Jeib* to the floor of the great valley itself. Further south, near Ain el-Weibeh, it is a rolling gravelly desert with round naked hills of considerable elevation. At Wady Ghurundel it is ‘an expanse of shifting sands, broken by innumerable undulations and low hills,’ and ‘countersected by a hundred water-courses’ . . . Nor is the heat less terrible than the desolation, and all travellers, almost without exception, bear testimony to the difficulties of journeying in a region where the sirocco appears to blow almost without intermission.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 5. *This light bread; i.e., the*

manna. According to Fuerst, the adjective in the Heb. when applied to food, conveys the idea of *contemptible, starving*.

Verse 6. *Fiery serpents.* Heb., lit., burning snakes. The adjective does not point to the bright colour of the snakes, but to the inflammatory effect of their bite. Venomous reptiles of various kinds abound in the neighbourhood (comp. Deut. viii. 15). The burning snake must not be identified with the “fiery flying serpent” of Isa. xiv. 29; xxx. 6.

Verse 8. *Make thee a fiery serpent; i.e., a serpent of a similar appearance to those which had bitten the people.* This similarity of aspect was an essential element of the symbolism.

Upon a pole. Heb., a standard or ensign.

Verse 10. *Oboth.* In chap. xxxii., 41-43, two other stations are mentioned in this part of their journey before Oboth. From Hor they went to Zalmonah, from Zalmonah to Punon, and from Punon to Oboth. The exact site of those places is not very certain. Zalmonah was probably in the Wady Ithm, “a low gap in the hills, which turns the eastern range of the Arabah, and through which the Israelites must have passed on their way to Moab. It is still one of the regular roads to Petra, and in ancient times seems to have been the main approach from Elath or Akaba, as it is the only road from the south which enters Petra through the Sîk.”—*Stanley. Sin. and Pal.* Entering the Wady Ithm, “the route of the Israelites took a sharp turn, and ran thenceforward in a north-easterly direction.” Punon or Phinon, according to Eusebius and Jerome, “was situated between Petra and Zoar.” This locality suits the requirements of the history. “Oboth was north of Punon, east of the northern part of Edom, and is pretty certainly the same as the present pilgrim halting-place el-Ahsa.”—*Speaker's Comm.* But really the exact site cannot be determined.

Verse 11. *Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, &c.* Margin: “Heaps of Abarim.” The name is

generally interpreted as signifying, "the heaps, or ruins, of the further regions." Keil and Del.: "ruins of the crossings over." "Ije-abarim," says Mr. Grove, "was on the S.E. boundary of the territory of Moab; not on the pasture-downs of the Mishor, the modern *Belka*, but in the *midbar*, the waste uncultivated 'wilderness' on its skirts. No identification of its situation has been attempted, nor has the name been found lingering in the locality, which, however, has yet to be explored. If there is any connexion between the Ije-Abarim and the Har-Abarim, the mountain-range opposite Jericho, then Abarim is doubtless a general appellation for the whole of the highland east of the Dead Sea."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 12. *Valley of Zared.* More correctly: "the brook of Zered." Dr. Hayman says, this is "a brook or valley running into the Dead Sea near its S.E. corner, which Dr. Robinson with some probability suggests as identical with the *Wady el Ahsy*. It lay between Moab and Edom, and is the limit of the proper term of the Israelites' wandering (Deut. ii. 14)."—*Bibl. Dict.* Keil and Del., however, suggest that "the *Wady el Ahsy* must already have been crossed when they came to the border of Moab (verse 11). In all probability it was the *Wady Kerek*, in the upper part of its course, not far from *Katrane*, on the pilgrim road."

Verse 13. *The other side of Arnon, &c.* Arnon, the present *Wady el Mojeb*, is a torrent which rises in the mountains of Arabia, flows through the wilderness, and falls into the Dead Sea. It "formed the boundary between Moab and the Amorites, on the north of Moab, and afterwards between Moab and Israel (Reuben). From Judges xi. 18, it would seem to have been also the east border of Moab."—*Bibl. Dict.* The Israelites could not have crossed the *Mojeb* itself—"so dreadfully wild and so deep a valley." The encampment of Israel must have been in the upper part of the Arnon and on its south side; apparently opposite to Kede-

moth (Deut. ii. 24, 26); and here they effected their passage across.

Verse 14. *The book of the wars of Jehovah.* "This was probably," says Dean Perowne, "a collection of ballads and songs composed on different occasions by the watch-fires of the camp, and for the most part, though not perhaps exclusively, in commemoration of the victories of the Israelites over their enemies. The title shows us that these were written by men imbued with a deep sense of religion, and who were therefore foremost to acknowledge that not their own prowess, but Jehovah's Right Hand, had given them the victory when they went forth to battle. Hence it was called, not 'The Book of the Wars of Israel,' but 'The Book of the Wars of Jehovah.' Possibly this is the book referred to in Exod. xvii. 14, especially as we read (ver. 16), that when Moses built the altar which he called *Jehovah-Nissi* (Jehovah is my banner), he exclaimed 'Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' This expression may have given the name to the book.

"The fragment quoted from this collection is difficult, because the allusions in it are obscure . . . 'Wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of Jehovah,

"'Vaheb in Suphah and the torrent-beds;
Arnon and the slope of the torrent-beds
Which turneth to where Ar lieth,
And which leaneth upon the border of
Moab.'"—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 15. *The dwelling of Ar, &c.* "Ar was on the bank of the Arnon, lower down the stream than where the Israelites crossed. And near the spot where the upper Arnon (*Seil Saideh*) receives the tributary *Nahaliel* (ver. 19), there rises, in the midst of the meadow-land between the two torrents, a hill covered with what are doubtless the ruins of the ancient city. A neighbouring aqueduct testifies to its former importance. The peculiarity of the site points to it as 'the city that is in the midst of the river' (Josh. xiii. 9, 16; cf. Deut. ii. 36). It had been,

perhaps, heretofore the chief city of the Moabites; it now marked the limit of their territory; and it was hither accordingly that the king of Moab went to welcome Balaam (xxii. 36). It was respected by the Israelites (Deut. ii. 9, 29), as being still a frontier city of Moab, although it lay on the northern bank of what was elsewhere the boundary stream; but it had not escaped the ravages of the Amorites in the recent war (ver. 28).—*Speaker's Comm.*

This Ar is not to be identified with Rabbath-Moab, which is still called Rabbah, in the midst of the land of Moab, about midway between *Kerek* and *Wady Mojob*.

Verse 16. *Beer*; i.e., a well; and is probably the same as Beer-elim, the "well of heroes" (Isa. xv. 8).

Verses 17, 18. *Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, &c.* Perowne translates:

"Spring up, O well! sing ye to it:
Well, which the princes dug,
Which the nobles of the people bored
With the sceptre-of-office, with their staves."

Mattanah, the name of the next halting-place, signifies a gift. The site has not been identified with certainty.

Verse 19. *Nahaliel*; i.e., "torrent of God." Probably corresponded with the *Wady Encheileh*, "which runs into the *Mojob*, the ancient Arnon, a short distance to the east of the place at which the road between Rabbah and Aroer crosses the ravine of the latter river." The name *Encheileh* is the same as *Nahaliel* with a slight alteration in its form.

Bamoth is a shorter form of *Bamoth-Baal*, i.e., the high places of Baal (chap. xxii. 41; Josh. xiii. 17). In the next verse it is spoken of as "Bamoth in the ravine." According to Josh. xiii. 17 it was near to Dibon-Gad and Beth-Baal-Meon.

Verse 20. *The country of Moab*. The margin is more correct, "the field of Moab." The expression in this place denotes a portion of the tableland having Rabbath-Ammon on the

north, and the Arnon on the south. It corresponds with "all the plain from *Medeba* to *Dibon* . . . and all the plain by *Medeba*" (Josh. xiii. 9, 16).

The top of Pisgah. Margin: Or "the hill." Heb.: "The top, or head, of the *Pisgah*." "The *Pisgah*," says Mr. Grove, "must have been a mountain range or district, the same as, or a part of, that called the mountains of *Abarim* (comp. Deut. xxxii. 49, with xxxiv. 1). It lay on the east of Jordan, contiguous to the field of Moab, and immediately opposite *Jericho*. The field of *Zophim* was situated on it, and its highest point or summit—its 'head'—was the Mount *Nebo*. If it was a proper name we can only conjecture that it denoted the whole or part of the range of the highlands on the east of the lower Jordan."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Which looketh toward Jeshimon. Margin: "Towards the wilderness." Keil and Del.: "'looks across the face of the desert.' *Jeshimon*, the desert, is the plain of *Ghor-el-Belka*, i.e., the valley of desolation on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea."

Verse 21. *Amorites*, i.e., mountaineers. One of the chief nations of the Canaanites (Gen. x. 15, 16).

Verse 22. Comp. chap. xx. 17.

Verse 23. *Jahaz*. "From the terms of the narrative in Num. xxi and Deut. ii.," says Mr. Grove, "we should expect that *Jahaz* was in the extreme south part of the territory of *Sihon*, but yet north of the river *Arnon* (see Deut. ii. 24, 36; and the words in 31, 'begin to possess'), and in exactly this position a site named *Jazaza* is mentioned by Schwarz (227), though by him only. But this does not agree with the statements of Eusebius, who says it was existing in his day between *Medeba* and *Δηβός*, by which he probably intends *Dibon*, which would place *Jahaz* considerably too far to the north. Like many others relating to the places east of the Dead Sea, this question must await further research."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 24. *Unto Jabbok*, now called *Wady Zerka*, a stream which intersects

the mountain range of Gilead, as it was afterwards called (comp. Josh. xii. 2, 5), and falls into the Jordan about 45 miles north of the Arnon.

For the border of the children of Ammon was strong. This was the reason why Sihon had not carried his conquests further and taken the territory of the Ammonites. The reason why the Israelites did not enter the land of the Ammonites is given in Deut. ii. 19.

Verse 25. *Heshbon.* This city was situated 20 miles due east of the Jordan at the point where it falls into the Dead Sea. The city is now in ruins, which are situated on a low hill, and are more than a mile in circumference. Its modern name is *Heshbân*.

All the villages thereof. Heb., as in margin: "the daughters," i.e., the smaller towns, which are enumerated in chap. xxxii. 34-38; and Josh. xiii. 15-28. Heshbon, as we see from the next verse, being the capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites.

Verse 26. *All his land.* "Evidently that to the north of the Arnon alone is intended."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 27-30. Dean Perowne speaks of this as "a song of victory, composed after a defeat of the Moabites and the occupation of their territory. It is in a taunting, mocking strain; and is commonly considered to have been written by some *Israelitish* bard on the occupation of the Amorite territory. Yet the manner in which it is introduced would rather lead to the belief that we have here the translation of an old Amorite ballad. . . . Then follows a little scrap of Amorite history: 'For Heshbon is the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and he had waged war with the former king of Moab, and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon. Wherefore the ballad-singers (המשלים) say:—

"Come ye to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon be built and established!
For fire went from Heshbon,

A flame out of the stronghold (קריה)
of Sihon,

Which devoured Ar of Moab,
The lords of the high places of Arnon.

Woe to thee, Moab!

Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh!
He (i.e., Chemosh thy god) hath given up his
sons as fugitives,

And his daughters into captivity,
To Sihon, king of the Amorites.

Then we cast them down; Heshbon perished
even unto Dibon,

And we laid (it) waste unto Nophah, which
(reacheth) unto Medeba.'

If the song is of Hebrew origin, then the former part of it is a biting taunt, 'Come, ye Amorites, into your city of Heshbon, and build it up again. Ye boasted that *ye* had burnt it with fire, and driven out its Moabite inhabitants; but now *we* are come in our turn and have burnt Heshbon, and driven you out as *ye* once burnt it and drove out its Moabite possessors.'—*Bibl. Dict.*

Another interpretation is given in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "In the first six lines (vers. 27, 28) the poet imagines for the Amorites a song of exultation for their victories over Moab, and for the consequent glories of Heshbon, their own capital. In the next three lines (ver. 29), he himself joins in this strain; which now becomes one of half-real, half-ironical compassion for the Moabites, whom their idol, Chemosh, was unable to save. But in the last two lines (ver. 30), a startling change takes place; and the new and decisive triumph of the poet's own countrymen is abruptly introduced; and the boastings of the Amorites fade utterly away."

Verse 29. *Chemosh*, i.e., the national deity of the Moabites (Jer. xlviii. 7, 13, 46), and of the Ammonites (Judg. xi. 24).

Verse 30. *Dibon*, afterwards called Dibon-Gad, "lay four miles north of the Arnon; and its extensive ruins still bear the name Dhîbân. It was here that the Moabite stone was discovered by the Rev. T. Klein in 1868."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Nophah "is unknown, unless it be Arneibah, 10 miles to the eastward of Medeba."—*Ibid.*

Medeba is now called *Madeba*, and is situated upon the top of a hill, about 4 miles S.E. of *Heshbon*.

Verse 32. *Jaazer* or *Jazer* is probably to be identified with the ruins of

es Szir, about 9 miles west of *Rabbath-Ammon*, and about 12 miles north of *Heshbon*.

Verse 33. *Bashan*. "The limits of Bashan are very strictly defined. It extended from the border of Gilead on the south to Mount Hermon on the north (Deut. iii. 3, 10, 14; Josh. xii. 5; 1. Chron. v. 23), and from the Arabah or Jordan valley on the west to Salchah (*Sulchad*) and the borders of the Geshurites, and the Maacathites on the east (Josh. xii. 3-5; Deut. iii. 10)." —*Bibl. Dict.*

Edrei. "Now Edhra'ah, vulgarly Der'a; situate on a branch of the Jar-

muk. This river is not mentioned in Scripture, but formed the boundary between Gilead and Bashan. The identification of Edrei rests on the frontier position of the site, on the modern name, and on the testimony of Eusebius; but it is only recently that the explorations of Wetzstein ('*Reisebericht*,' pp. 47, 8) have disclosed the facts that the original city was subterranean, and that its streets may still be seen running in all directions beneath the present inhabited town, which is built on the ground above." —*Speaker's Comm.*

THE BENEFIT OF REVERSES.

(Verses 1-3.)

These verses suggest:—

I. That reverses are sometimes encountered in the path of duty.

"And when the Canaanite king of Arad, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners." An illustration of the opposition and the reverses with which we often meet in the way of duty. With our present characters and in our present circumstances duty is not always easy. In an evil world to tread the path of truth and right must always involve more or less of difficulty and trial. In following the Divine direction we are sure to meet with some "Canaanite king of Arad" and his allies. This is true of—

1. *The individual Christian life*. We have Canaanites in ourselves, in our carnal appetites and passions, &c. These resist the progress of the soul in holiness. Worthy spiritual attainments or achievements are never made without earnest effort and severe struggle.

2. *Christian enterprise*. Workers in the cause of Jesus Christ amongst men have to contend against opposition, and sometimes, like Israel at this time, sustain temporary repulse and

loss. This is true of Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, ministers of the Gospel, and Christian missionaries to the heathen both at home and abroad.

II. Reverses encountered in the path of duty arouse the true-hearted to more vigorous effort.

"And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." Repulse and loss stirred them up to take resolute measures to obtain a complete victory. That which utterly appals the cowardly, acts as a challenge to the courageous. Where the one cowers in dismay, the other rises into the exertion of conquering strength. To the true-hearted, reverses are a trumpet-call to renewed and more determined effort. In this instance the reverse led Israel to put forth:—

1. *Earnest prayer for success*. "And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord," &c. It has been well said that "this spirit would have been intolerable in the people of 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' had it not been that Divine justice had resolved to extirpate the awfully filthy and idolatrous nations of Canaan, to give their

land to the Israelites among whom His worship was preserved, and to make them the *executioners* of righteous wrath." The idea of this vow, by which they urged their prayer for victory, seems to be this, that if God would grant their request they would take to themselves no gain or glory from the conquest, but give all the honour to Him. True prayer is an excellent preparation for work or for warfare.

2. *Vigorous effort to succeed.* That Israel made such an effort is very clearly implied in the brief record.

To these two things united—wise and determined effort, and earnest believing prayer, all things are possible. "Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer? That kind of man never fails." And this especially when his will is "strong in the Lord." (a)

III. When reverses in the path of duty thus arouse the true-hearted to effort they contribute to their complete triumph.

It was so in this case. "And the

Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites," &c.

1. *Earnest prayer was answered by God.* He inspired them with determination and courage, and so granted their request. True prayer is always heard and answered by Him.

2. *Wise and resolute effort achieved success.* "They utterly destroyed them and their cities." Thus a slight reverse stirred them up to such efforts as resulted in a complete triumph. (b) Apply this to Christian life and work. (c)

Conclusion.

1. *Warning to those who oppose any true and good cause.* "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

2. *Encouragement to those who are toiling in good but difficult enterprises.* Be not disheartened by difficulties. Let reverses rouse you to more powerful and persistent efforts, and they will thus urge you onward to the achievement of more complete and splendid conquests. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) It is not ease, but effort—not facility, but difficulty—that makes men. There is, perhaps, no station in life in which difficulties have not to be encountered and overcome before any decided measure of success can be achieved. Those difficulties are, however, our best instructors, as our mistakes often form our best experience. We learn wisdom from failure more than from success. We often discover what *will* do by finding out what will not do; and he who never made a mistake never made a discovery. Horne Tooke used to say of his studies in intellectual philosophy, that he had become all the better acquainted with the country, through having had the good luck sometimes to lose his way. And a distinguished investigator of physical science has left it on record that whenever in the course of his researches he encountered an apparently insuperable obstacle, he generally found himself on the brink of some novel discovery. The very greatest things—great thoughts, discoveries, inventions—have generally been nurtured in hardship, often pondered over in sorrow, and at length established with difficulty.—*Samuel Smiles.*

(b) It has been said and truly, that it is the

defeat that tries the general more than the victory. Washington lost far more battles than he gained; but he succeeded in the end. The Romans, in their most victorious campaigns, almost invariably began with defeats. Moreau used to be compared, by his companions, to a drum, which nobody hears of except it be beaten. Wellington's military genius was perfected by encounter with difficulties of, apparently, the most overwhelming character, but which only served to nerve his resolution, and bring out more prominently his great qualities as a man and a general. So the skilful mariner obtains his best experience amidst storms and tempests, which train him to self-reliance, courage, and the highest discipline; and we probably owe to rough seas and wintry nights, the best training of our race of British seamen, who are certainly not surpassed by any in the world.

The battle of life, in by far the greater number of cases, must necessarily be fought up-hill; and to win it without a struggle were perhaps to win it without honour. If there were no difficulties there would be no success; if there were nothing to struggle for, there would be nothing to be achieved.

Difficulties may intimidate the weak, but they act only as a wholesome stimulus to men of pluck and resolution. All experience of life, indeed, serves to prove that the impediments thrown in the way of human advancement may, for the most part, be overcome by steady good conduct, honest zeal, activity, perseverance, and, above all, by a determined resolution to surmount difficulties, and stand up manfully against misfortune. When Columbus was threatened by the mutineers amongst his crew, he himself, hopeful and unsubdued, bore up against all opposition. "Give me but three days," he said; and before the three days had passed, he trod the shores of the New World. —*Ibid.*

(c) Need any one be discouraged who has begun to live a Christian life because so often he has failed and fallen into backsliding? Is a true pupil discouraged because so many of his lessons are imperfect, because he has forced holidays which have broken up the impetus of study, if still the purpose to be a student remains with him? Whatever may have been the arguments of the past, let them be forgotten. Try again. There are thousands of Christians who too soon grow discouraged,

saying, "I have proved that I was mistaken. I have proved that the root of the matter was not in me. There is no use; I have tried and failed." There is all the use in the world. No man ever fails until death settles the great conflict. Because you have begun and lagged, because you have begun and stumbled, because you have begun and gone back a little way, do not give up the whole contest. —*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore with. Look at the Mont Cenis tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks: with a sharp tool, edged with a diamond, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says: "Is thy work hard? set a harder resolution against it, for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something harder still." May the Spirit of God work in thee invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance. Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel. Under persecutions and difficulties, let God's people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it, for according to our faith so shall it be unto us. —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

A DEADLY PLAGUE AND A DIVINE ANTIDOTE.

(Verses 4-9.)

Let us notice—

I. The sin of the people.

They fall once more into the sin of which they had so often been guilty in former times—that of murmuring. "The people spake against God and against Moses," &c. But let us consider—

1. *The occasion of their sin.* (1) The circuitous route by which they journeyed. "They journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom." Their direct way would have been through the land of Edom; but the King of Edom opposed this; so they were compelled to travel by this circuitous route, compassing the land of Edom (see notes on chap. xx. 14-21). (2) The trying country over which they journeyed. "The low-lying plain of Arabia on the whole is a terrible desert, with a loose, sandy soil, and drifts of granite and other stones, where terrible sand-storms sometimes arise from the neighbourhood of the Red Sea." "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the

way" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver. 4). (3) The privations which they encountered on their journey. The Arabah was not likely to furnish them with much food; so they were almost or altogether dependent upon the manna with which they were supplied by God. And it is very probable that there would be a great scarcity of drinkable water. Hence "the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" &c.

2. *The nature of their sin.* (1) Murmuring. They "spake against God and against Moses." (a) (2) Unbelief. How sinful was the want of faith which they manifested in speaking of dying in the wilderness, after all they had experienced of the protection and provision of God! (b) (3) Ingratitude. The goodness of God in supplying their wants is altogether disregarded by them. They speak as though they were utterly destitute: "There is no bread, neither is there any water." (c) (4) Contempt of Divine blessings.

"And our soul loatheth this light bread,"—"a word of excessive scorn; as if they had said, 'This innutritive, unsubstantial, cheat-stomach stuff.'"—*A. Clark*. Thus their rebellion was one of great heinousness, involving several sins.

II. The punishment of their sin.

"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." The punishment was,

1. *Severe*. The bite of the serpent poisoned the body of its victim, causing intense and burning pain, and resulting in death. "Much people of Israel died."

2. *Just*. Their heinous sin called for a severe punishment. "They had unjustly complained for want of water (ver. 5), to chastise them for which God sends upon them this thirst, which no water would quench. Those that cry without cause have justly cause given them to cry out. They distrustfully concluded that they must 'die in the wilderness,' and God took them at their word, chose their delusions, and brought their unbelieving fears upon them; many of them did die."—*M. Henry*.

3. *Divine*. Their punishment was from God. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people." In the Arabah, venomous reptiles abound (comp. Deut. viii. 15). "Yet we never hear of their being bitten or killed by them till now. From this we infer that they had been marvelously protected hitherto from this as from other dangers of the way; but the protection which they had experienced being now withdrawn, the serpents—in this part of the desert unusually numerous—had their poisonous jaws unbound, and smote them at their will."—*Kittó*. (d)

III. The penitence of the people.

Let us mark how their penitence was awakened, and developed, and led to their relief.

1. *Their punishment led to their penitence*. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said we have sinned, for we

have spoken against the Lord, and against thee." "When he slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and inquired early after God." The penitence which is begotten of punishment seldom leads to moral improvement. (e)

2. *Their penitence led them to appeal to Moses for help*. They said unto him, "Pray unto the Lord for us, that he take away the serpents from us." This request implies,—(1) Consciousness of their moral unfitness to approach God acceptably. (2) Faith in the efficacy of intercessory prayer. (3) The persuasion that intercessory prayer to be efficacious must be offered by the good. Thus their request to Moses to "pray unto the Lord for" them was an undesigned and convincing testimony to the excellence of his character and conduct.

3. *In answer to their appeal Moses entreated God on their behalf*. "And Moses prayed for the people." He manifested in this the true magnanimity of a godly soul. He blesses them who reviled him, and prays for them who spitefully used him (comp. Matt. v. 44). (g)

IV. The Divine antidote for the deadly plague.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole;" &c. (vers. 8, 9). That this had a typical significance is placed beyond dispute by the words of our Lord to Nicodemus in John iii. 14, 15. This application of the incident we shall endeavour to make hereafter. At present we confine our attention to four facts concerning Heaven's antidote for the deadly bite of the serpents.

1. *It was prescribed by God*. Man could not stay the dread ravages of these serpents. Their bite was poisonous and deadly. And in answer to the prayer of His servant, Jehovah interposed for the salvation of the people. He directed Moses what to do to arrest the onward march of death. "Jehovah said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent," &c. Human salvation from sin is of Divine origin; it is an outcome of infinite wisdom and love.

2. *It resembled the poisonous serpents.* "Make thee a fiery serpent," &c. The brazen serpent was made to resemble the fiery serpents which had bitten them, but it was without venom and thoroughly harmless. The disease and death came by the serpents, and the healing and life were to come by this serpent. So "God sent his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3). "Since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead" (comp. 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22-24).

3. *Its efficacy was conditional.* "It shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It was not the mere look that saved. The look involved—(1) Faith in the Divine promise that every one

who looked upon the brazen serpent should live. If they questioned and criticised the fitness of the remedy they perished; if they believed the promise and looked to the serpent, they were healed (*h*). (2) Obedience to the Divine direction. How simple are these conditions! How universally available! He who looks in faith to Jesus Christ shall be saved from sin. Comp. Isa. xlv. 22; John iii. 14, 15. (*i*)

4. *Its efficacy was infallible.* "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Whoever complied with the Divine condition was healed by the Divine power. Whosoever looked lived. And whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life (John iii. 15, 16, 36).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 267.

(b) For illustrations on *Unbelief*, see p. 252.

(c) For illustrations on *Ingratitude*, see pp. 247, 368.

(d) For illustrations on *The Punishment of Sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 258, 312, 318, 374.

(e) For an illustration on *Penitence Begotten of Punishment*, see p. 269.

(f) For illustrations on *The Power of Prayer*, see pp. 183, 225.

(g) The brave only know how to forgive—it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue that human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good and kind actions; cowards have even fought, nay, sometimes conquered; but a coward never forgave—it is not his nature.—*L. Sterne*.

There are some persons that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them; any more—an everlasting pique remaining; and they cannot but discover a great shyness, shun them, baulk them, decline them, and think and speak hardly of them on all occasions. But the Divine nature in the regenerate inclines a person to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate, if there have been breaks, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature—by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.—*John Howe*.

For another illustration on the *Forgiving spirit*, see p. 317.

(h) As a dim, dazzled eye, that looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness, was of

more avail to a poor Israelite, when stung with a fiery serpent, than any use that could possibly be made of all his other members—little could the swiftness of his feet, strength of his body, nimbleness of hands, volubility of tongue, quickness of ear, or anything else have availed, had there not been an eye to have looked on it—so, without faith, we lie dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot but perish of the mortal stings which Satan hath blistered us withal; so that had we perfect repentance, sound knowledge, and sincere love, not one of them, nor all of them together, could possibly cure us if there were not faith to apprehend Christ for our satisfaction, and a propitiation for all our sins. It is only our faith in Christ—a true faith, though a weak, dim-sighted faith—that looking up to the typified serpent, Christ Jesus, can cure our wounded, sin-sick souls, and make us here to live to God, and hereafter in all happiness with Him.—*Paul Bayne*.

Sight is the noblest sense; it is quick—we can look from earth to heaven in a moment; it is large—we can see the hemisphere of the heavens at one view; it is sure and certain (in hearing, we may be deceived), and, lastly, it is the most affecting sense. Even so, faith is the quickest, the largest, the most certain, the most affecting grace: like an eagle in the clouds, at one view it sees Christ in heaven, and looks down upon the world; it looks backwards and forwards; it sees things past, present, and to come. Therefore this grace is said (2 Cor. iv. 18) to behold things unseen and eternal.—*Richard Sibbs*.

(i) God did not require of every Israelite,

or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which the serpent upon the pole was made, or by what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it: it was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another: if the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is "faith," which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple, as by the strongest and

most towering mind; it is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men; He required not that every man should be a philosopher or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain, and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest: could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health by the expulsion of the venom.—*Charnocke*.

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.

(Verse 4.)

"And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is not our rest, it is not our abode, but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity.

I. Point out the discouragements in the way.

1. *The way is circuitous.* This is suggested by the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor," &c. . . . Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and fears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy; they seem to themselves to go backward, and, indeed, are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing and recovering the ground that has been lost.

2. *The way is through a wilderness.* Moses reminded Israel of this in Deut. viii. 15, 16. A wilderness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, &c. Thus, this world is a state of great

privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, &c. In a spiritual sense, this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the Christian knows they are not the produce of the soil. Again: there is much intricacy in the Christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness: so the Christian often knows not how to explore his path. We must "search the Scriptures," and ask the guidance of the Spirit. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c.

3. *The way lies through a hostile country.* The Israelites were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: during our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God," &c. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, and combine their efforts for our destruction.

4. *The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage are discouraging.* There are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens His people, though He pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. These chastenings of the Lord often drink up or oppress the spirit, and overwhelm the soul.

5. *The total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way.* I do not think that all that died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number: yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition" (comp. Gal. iv. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 21). Nothing weakens the confidence of the Christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks.

6. *The length of the way is discouraging.* The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness, was forty years. This was a tedious journey: a type of the journeys of the church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey. Now, though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain. We must hold out unto the end.

II. Direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

1. *It is "a right way."* Infinite Wisdom has ordained it: and if you

reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage; no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. Our sufferings are necessary to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin.

2. *God is with His people in the way.* He was with Israel to guide and defend them (comp. Matt. xxviii. 20). God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but He is in the Church by His special grace, as a vital principle, and ever-living friend, to sustain, animate, and influence.

3. *There is no other way that leads to heaven.* You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct you.

Go forward, then, Christian; go forward; "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

If any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good," &c.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

THE UNDESIGNED TESTIMONY OF THE UNGODLY TO THE PRECIOUSNESS AND POWER OF PIETY.

(Verse 7.)

Briefly narrate the facts and circumstances.

In their trouble the Israelites come to Moses, confessing their sin, and asking him to intercede for them with God; and in this request of the text we have an illustration of—*The striking testimony which the ungodly often bear to the value and importance of piety.* It is ever true that vice pays homage to virtue, and that the good ever command the respect and the conscience of the evil. His life condemns theirs; they feel that he

is a better and a nobler man than they are. They may hate his religion; but they testify to its value in the esteem in which their consciences hold him. It was so here; the people had been speaking against Moses, and yet they come to him, and ask him to pray for them. They witness to the value of piety.

I. By showing that the want of it is weakness—

The wicked man often swaggers and boasts; but he is an arrant coward in trouble. A guilty "conscience doth

make cowards of us all." The people here were in great danger, and they were full of alarm. They felt that they could not pray, and they were afraid to die. They were pitifully weak because they were ungodly, &c.

II. By seeking help from him whom they knew to be "a man of God."

They owned that Moses could help them, though they could not help themselves. They had spoken against Moses, and had treated him badly; yet they expect him to forgive them and to pray for them. Men of the world expect God's people to be better than themselves. Is not this a grand testimony to the value and importance of piety?

III. By confessing that Moses had nothing to fear from God, while they had everything to fear.

They ask him to pray to God for them; they were in dread of God. By this they own that piety is best to approach God; and by seeking help from God through Moses, they confess that their past conduct was wrong. They condemned themselves.

IV. By acknowledging that Moses could get from God what they could not.

Their act testified to their belief that Moses had power with God, and that they had not. It is a grand thing for man to have access to God; for sinful, weak man, to have power with the Almighty! The wicked dreads God; the godly pleads with Him as a child with his father. God hears and answers him; he has power with God. The wicked feels this and seeks his help when he has been brought into distress. There is no treasure for man like piety. All feel this when, as in

the text, they are in trouble and in the presence of death.

Thus by their request to Moses the Israelites condemned their own life, and bore striking, though unconscious, testimony to the value of piety and the importance of religion. This has been the testimony of the ungodly in all ages;—e.g., Moses and Pharaoh; Samuel and the people (1 Sam. xii. 19); Herod and John the Baptist. And to-day the ungodly bear striking testimony to the value of piety:—

1. *By expecting Christians to be better than themselves.* They ought to be so; but the point now is, that worldly men expect them to be so. Why should they be better, unless it be for their piety?

2. *By seeking the help of Christians when they are in trouble or in the presence of death.* It is religion that they think of then. It is those whom they believe to be God's people that they send for to help them. They send not for old associates in sin; they feel that they cannot help them. But they send for the minister or for some other Christian to pray with them. They thus testify that piety is best for life, and best for death, and best for all. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Conclusion.

1. *Let Christians live so as to command the conscience of the Christless.* Let their life commend religion, &c.

2. *Let the Christless be true to himself by living up to his convictions.* Sad for one to live a life his conscience tells him is wrong. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."—David Lloyd.

A TERRIBLE CALAMITY AND AN EARNEST PRAYER.

(Verse 7.)

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us."

In the memorable conversation Christ held with Nicodemus (John iii. 1-21), He refers to the circumstance of the

Brazen Serpent erected by Moses as a pointed illustration of His own death—as illustrating the method of forgiving sin. He also refers to the grace of the Spirit as the effective

method of subduing sin. And the recollection of these important doctrines will be of great service to us in the contemplation of the important history now before us.

I. A terrible calamity; the just consequence of sin.

"The Lord sent fiery serpents," &c. They existed in that part of the wilderness before, but were not permitted to invade the camp. The restraint was taken off now, and they were sent to do the work of death amidst the guilty thousands of the congregation. "*Fiery serpents*," from their colour and aspect, or from the intense heat of their sting, as though the current of blood were changed into tides of fire in the sufferer's veins.

Why sent? For Israel's sin. What sin? Sin of murmuring; sin of unbelief; sin of rebellion. Seven times Israel murmured and mutinied against Moses; and seven times were they threatened or punished. A discontented man will find or make something to repine at everywhere. Sometimes the way was too long; then no water—or it was bitter; then no bread—or it was light bread. Either way, "The people spake against God, and against Moses."

In Israel's history we see our own. Human nature is not improved, as some wines grow mellow with age, for we find ourselves just as perverse and rebellious as they were. If any change it must be for the worse rather than the better. Our sins are against greater light and greater love; not against the Law only, but the Gospel too; not against Moses, but Christ.

Learn, that *sin brings sorrow*. Sin flatters like a serpent at the beginning, but stings like one at last (comp. Prov. xxiii. 32).

See the *resemblance between sin and its punishment*. The Israelites had been like serpents to Moses and Aaron, always ready to nip and sting; now God sends serpents among them. "Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord;" and they were destroyed by fire. The Jews crucified our Lord; the Romans crucified them in vast numbers. Many an undutiful

child has found his parent's wrongs avenged in his own offspring.

The serpents in the camp were *very numerous*; not here and there one, but in great numbers. Alas, how many evils does sin produce in all the relations and engagements of life! How many *serpents* follow in the train of sin! They follow you at home and abroad, in the family and in the world, in your lying down and rising up.

There is the serpent of *remorse in the conscience*—a serpent very difficult to untwine from the folds of the heart. The serpent of *discord in the family*, when a man's vices follow him home, and he finds the effects of his own misconduct breaking up the peace of home (comp. Prov. xi. 29). The serpent of *treachery among your friendships*; for the world shakes from it those whom it cannot trust. The serpent of *disgrace and contempt*, the consequences of the vices of the character and the violation of integrity and uprightness. "What fruit had ye then in those things?" &c. (Rom. vi. 21). Then there is the serpent of endless agony and despair in "hell, where their worm dieth not," &c.

II. An earnest resolution and prayer; the result of sanctified affliction.

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." Their sufferings led to humiliation, repentance, and prayer. They knew that none but He who sent the affliction could take it away, and, therefore, they did not ask Moses to try what he could do by any process of legislation or human device, but—"Pray unto the Lord," &c. Prayer is your only remedy for the serpent brood of sin. "We have sinned, for," &c. Sanctified affliction leads to this. Examples: Job, Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 18), the prodigal (Luke xv. 14 sqq.).

III. A mysterious appointment, the result of Divine grace.

"And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent," &c.

Samuel Thodey.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 8, 9.)

"A type," says Mr. Steward, "is a fact precedent to some other greater than itself, designed to prepare the way for it, and to be a voucher for it, as pre-ordained and brought to pass by the Divine wisdom and power. It is the shadow of a coming truth projected far before it, showing its figure rather than its substance, its image, not its properties."

The words of our Lord in John iii. 14, 15, are our warrant for regarding the brazen serpent as a type of Himself. In the serpent-bitten Israelites we have an illustration of the condition of sinful men, and in the brazen serpent we have an illustration of the remedy for the sad condition of sinful men. We discover an analogy in:—

I. The malady.

1. In both cases it was *communicated*. It was communicated to the Israelites by the bite of the serpent. Sin was imparted to man by "that old serpent, which is the devil." It is not native to human nature, but a foul and terrible importation.

2. In both it is *painful*. The bite of the serpent caused the most distressing pain; the poison burned and tormented the victims. So the venom of sin rankles in human nature; sin causes discord, guilt, dread, anguish; it is an element of torment.

3. In both it is *deadly*. Great numbers of the Israelites died from its effects. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death."

4. In both, *human remedies are un-availing*. It is said that the effects of the bite of the serpents were so rapid that "no remedy for the most virulent poison could, had it even been at hand, have been administered with sufficient rapidity and efficiency to have saved the people." No human means can arrest the deadly progress of the poison of sin, impart spiritual life and health, &c.

It must not be overlooked that the malady and its consequences in the one case were physical and temporal; in the other, spiritual and everlasting. Death would end the one; it is powerless to end the other.

II. The remedy.

In respect of this there is a twofold analogy.

1. The remedy in both cases was of *Divine origin*. No man could have devised a remedy for human sin and suffering. No angel could have grappled with the disease. In His sovereign grace God originated the method of human salvation.

2. There is an analogy as to the *means by which the remedy was effected*. (1) The serpent-bitten Israelites were healed by means of a serpent of similar appearance to those through whose bites they were perishing, but entirely free from venom. We are healed of sin and saved from death, by "God sending His Own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3), yet Himself perfectly free from sin. (2) The serpent without poison was uplifted to overcome the dire effects of the bite of the poisonous ones; so He who was made "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," "yet without sin," took upon Him the curse of the world by dying upon the cross, that He might thereby destroy death and the curse. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" &c.

III. The appropriation.

The bitten Israelites had to look to the Brazen Serpent, and looking they were saved. The sinner has to believe in Jesus Christ, and believing he is saved. The look of the Israelites is a remarkable illustration of faith. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved," &c. This method of appropriation—

1. *Is simple and easy*. Look, and be saved. Believe, and live. The little child, and the hoary patriarch; the

ignorant plebeian, and the educated philosopher, can and do believe. We are naturally credulous; we often believe too readily. As all can believe, the remedy is within the reach of all. Take heed lest the very simplicity of the appropriation be made by you an occasion of stumbling. (a)

2. *Is unmeritorious.* The dying Israelite did not merit healing and life by his look to the Brazen Serpent. Our faith cannot merit salvation. Faith excludes the idea of merit. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

3. *Is indispensable.* If the bitten Israelite refused to look to the Brazen Serpent he speedily died, notwithstanding the remedy. So faith is indispensable to salvation (comp. John iii. 18, 6).

IV. The result.

"It came to pass, that if a serpent

had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." "Who-soever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The serpent-bitten Israelites, who looked to the brazen serpent, were saved from physical anguish and death; the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ is saved from spiritual anguish and eternal death. The Israelite, saved for the time, would die soon or late; but the believer in Christ has everlasting and ever-glorious life.

Conclusion.

This world is like the camp of Israel. Sin is doing its terrible work. There is but one method of deliverance. Believe, and be saved. This one method is gloriously available to every one. "Who-soever believeth in Him," &c. Hence, if any one perish, he perishes by his own guilty neglect of the free and glorious remedy.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) By the term *looking*, we mean not an examination of the proofs which establish the truth of the Christian religion, although the testimony borne in its favour has been confirmed by wonders and miracles, and divers other effects of Divine power (Heb. ii. 4). We mean not by the term *looking*, the study of the Scriptures, although the word of prophecy, which is most sure, bears testimony throughout to Jesus. All this study is commendable and necessary, and far be it from us to dissuade you from a study which is in the present day too much neglected, and without which it is to be feared many will never come to look at Jesus Christ. But still all these labours together are not worth and cannot supersede the look for which we plead, whereas this look alone has often superseded them. No doubt "faith cometh by hearing;" in other words, hearing is the origin of faith, its starting point; but it belongs to the eye to finish the uncompleted work of hearing. Where, in your opinion, is there a man who has heard much, and read much, but not looked? a man who has carefully examined the proofs of the divinity of Christ, a man who has admitted them, and yet not looked at Christ? a man whom these proofs have convinced, that is to say vanquished, forced to believe, but whose faith, wholly passive, though it receives and yields to the truth, does not embrace it, and become united to it by a proper movement, and to whom, strange to say, the truth at once is

and is not? a man who, conducted by his studies to the very foot of the cross, remains there with downcast eyes, never raising them towards the cross, nor towards Him whom it bears, and whose adorable blood is running down this accursed tree? Others have not been able to believe until they lifted their eyes and looked at Christ. Those, I admit, have believed but with a forced faith, on the account of the whole world, and not on their own personal account; with a faith which is to them only a yoke and burden; a faith which they support, but which does not support them until, passing beyond this terminated labour, this exhausted spring, they begin to look simply at Jesus. Are we rash in speaking of this look as a condition of true faith, when Jesus Christ Himself has said, "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him" (i.e., every one who, having seen the Son, hath believed in Him), "hath everlasting life." These words, brethren, decidedly annex life to a look, not indeed to every kind of look, but to an attentive, earnest, prolonged look; a look more simple than that of observation; a look which looks, and does nothing more; a lively, unaffected, childlike look; a look in which the whole soul appears; a look of the heart and not of the intellect; one which does not seek to decompound its object, but receives it into the soul in all its entirety through the eye. —Alex. Vinet, D.D.

(b) The look of faith is saving. You can-

not turn a trustful eye to Him and not receive fullest salvation. Did any wounded Israelite look and not live? So no beholding sinner dies. . . . You never can have health, but from the cross. The rich must look; for riches cannot save. The poor must look; for poverty is no cloak for guilt. The learned must look; for learning can devise no other

help. The ignorant must look; for ignorance is not heaven's key. None ever lived without soul-sickness. None regains strength apart from Christ. But His cross stands uplifted high, even as the pole in Israel's camp. And it is not a vain voice which cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." —*H. Law, D.D.*

THE BRAZEN SERPENT; OR, THE TERRORS OF EXISTENCE FACED IN FAITH.

(Verses 8, 9.)

The story of the Brazen Serpent actually took place, we cannot doubt, as recorded by Moses. The notion of a "myth," which rationalistic interpreters might here suggest, is in this case absolutely inadmissible. For in the subsequent history, many hundreds of years later, we read of King Hezekiah being moved to destroy it, and to grind it to powder, because it had become an object of idolatrous veneration to the Israelites in his day. This fact, however, is not in the least inconsistent with its having been intended by the Divine mind to be *also* an embodied image or parable of spiritual and eternal truths—as true now in England in this nineteenth century of our era, as in Israel thousands of years ago.

This incident of the Brazen Serpent is recorded in a part of the Sacred Story which we are specially authorized to consider as typical—I mean the story of the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness (see 1 Cor. x. 11). It is therefore probable, at least, that any event recorded in this part of the Sacred History will repay study in that view. And with regard to this particular incident in that journey, it should be noted that our Lord Himself, in His conversation with Nicodemus, selected it out of all history to stand as a symbol of some of the highest mysteries of redemption.

What then is the primary and simplest meaning of the incident? It is a fundamental principle of all sound interpretation of inspired sayings, that all other and deeper lessons which they may be intended or adapted to teach,

must have their root in, and take their form and outline from, its primary and original sense. Now it is, I think, clear that the Brazen Serpent was primarily intended simply to represent and vividly picture to the suffering Israelites those terrible and repulsive instruments of God's avenging justice through which He was at that time inflicting suffering upon them for their sins. In the course of their wanderings they were brought into a region of great suffering and want. Under the pressure of their sufferings, they were led to murmur against Moses and Aaron; they looked back with regret and longing to the days when they "sat by the flesh-pots of Egypt." The spiritual degradation and misery of their life at that time, and their condition as slaves in a heathen land, were forgotten; nothing but the fleshly comforts and ease which they enjoyed there, compared with their present sufferings, was remembered. Their high calling and destiny as God's chosen people was overlooked or held cheap. This spirit of mind, like that of him "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and, caring for the present, despised the greater future, would, if it had become habitual, have brought them to destruction and utter alienation from God. A sharp remedy was therefore needed, and was applied by God's judicial providence. Fiery serpents were sent amongst them, from whose bite many of them died. It was in this state of things that Moses was directed to make a Brazen Serpent—that is, an actual image of the serpents from which they were at the time suf-

fering; and to set it up on a pole before their eyes. And he was to teach them that if they contemplated this image in faith, they should be healed. How can we doubt what was the primary meaning of this? Surely it must have been intended simply to teach the great and pregnant truth, that if, when any of the terrors of God set themselves in array against us, we have the courage, instead of turning away our eyes and thoughts from them, to *look deliberately at them in faith*; to hold them up, as it were, firmly between ourselves and heaven, and to contemplate them as God's appointments, and therefore certainly good under the circumstances, and if used aright; then the sting will be taken from these afflictions, and they will be turned into sources of spiritual blessing. It was a call to face God's terrible dispensation in faith and submission.

It is our duty and our wisdom to do so. To do otherwise, to keep any dark corner of our consciousness unlooked at, is to lay up a store of fears and uncertainties for our weaker moments, and to allow the enemy to lay an ambush against our peace. And even if the terror be one that affects only other men, not ourselves directly, yet when we become aware of it our wisdom and our duty is to face it, holding to the hand of God. Not to do so is selfishness. To suffer in other men's suffering is to have the mind of Christ; and all that is not that is sin. And, besides, unless we do dare to look all terrors in the face, we can never feel safe, even for ourselves. For if we believe in injustice or cruelty in God towards any creature, how can we be

sure He will not be unjust to us too, and to those we love?

Job is a great example of such courage in facing stern and mysterious facts in God's providence. . . . This powerful delineation of the terrible mysteries of evil and of sorrow that met him, clearly shows that he saw them in all their extremest terror—that he felt them in all their acuteness. And yet, nevertheless, he did, in the end, submit in absolute resignation and meekness to God. It was not, then, in blindness or darkness that he did so; but with eyes wide open and a heart keenly sensitive to all. Thus did he hold up his Brazen Serpent to the light; thus did he at last learn in full sight of it to acknowledge the Divine justice and goodness. This alone is true faith. Easy it is in sunny times, while sailing in sunny seas, . . . to call God, "Father," and believe that He is a Father. But the difficulty is to do so when all things seem against us, or when, though we ourselves are in prosperity, we see others round us in pain, in distress, in agony; to call God Father, as the Divine Man of Sorrows did, while hanging on a cross of torture, or from out of an agony of bloody sweat; when man is felt to be cruel and unjust; when the earth beneath our feet trembles; when the midday sky over our heads is darkened; when God Himself seems to have forsaken us, and we cannot see the reason. To cry then too, "Abba, Father," and believe what we say, is true faith—the only faith that fits the world as it is, and will carry us through life with eyes open.—*Canon Lyttelton, M.A., in "Good Words."*

UNEVENTFUL STAGES IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE.

(Verses 10-15.)

These verses yield the following homiletical observations:—

I. That many scenes in the pilgrimage of life are quiet and uneventful.

From their encampment in the Ara-

bah, with its events of intense and painful interest, the Israelites proceed to Obboth, or rather to Zalmonah, then to Punon, and then to Obboth (chap. xxxiii. 41-43), then to Ije-abarim, &c. At these

places nothing occurs to detain the historian, nothing which calls for record; the life of the people was ordinary and uneventful. So now, the greater portion of the life of the great majority of men is common-place, ordinary, and prosaic. This is a wise and kind arrangement of Providence, for—

1. *We are not fitted to bear the strain of continued and deep interest and excitement.* Our mental and our emotional natures would both suffer by the undue tension of such excitement. Both brain and heart would soon succumb to the strain. If the bow be always tightly strung it will be injured, and perhaps destroyed.

2. *The healthiest minds find pleasure and progress in quiet scenes and duties.* Craving for constant excitement is a characteristic of a diseased mind. Restlessness and love of change are indications of mental superficiality and poverty. Active and healthy minds find satisfaction and delight in the ordinary scenes and duties of daily life. (a)

II. That in the quiet and uneventful scenes of life we should follow the Divine directions.

The Israelites did so at this time. They were commanded (Deut. ii. 9) not to contend with the Moabites in battle, and for this reason they passed along the eastern border of the land of Moab, without entering into that land.

1. *The teachings of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are given to us for our whole life.* The directions of the former and the inspiration of the latter, are for life's ordinary seasons as well as for its epochs and crises. The plan of God covers our entire life. His will is binding upon us at all times, and in all places and circumstances.

2. *We can most effectually illustrate the principles and the power of godliness in the ordinary and uneventful scenes of life.* The testimony of our life in such seasons is—(1) *More natural* than in exciting and critical seasons. On the red-letter days of our life we are specially watchful and wise and diligent,

&c.—(2) *More continuous.* Seasons of great interest and importance occur but seldom in human lives; they are rare exceptions; as a rule, life is uneventful, prosaic. And consequently the testimony of our life in its ordinary seasons is—(3) *More influential* than in its few and exceptional seasons. Hence, the necessity of following the Divine directions at such times, and at all times. (b)

III. That many of the records of the pilgrimage of life are transient.

In "the book of the wars of Jehovah" many interesting records were probably written. It was a book which was of a religious spirit. The honour of their victories it ascribed to Jehovah (see *Explanatory Notes* on this verse). But it is lost. Nought of it remains save one or two brief quotations. "It was not," says Trapp, "any part of the Canon,—for God hath provided, that not one hair of that sacred head is diminished,—but as the chronicles of England, or some famous poem." How many human writings perish! Even good books do not always live. All material things pass away; but the spiritual abides. Books perish; but truth is imperishable. The records which exist only in books are doomed to oblivion, but those which exist in human hearts will live for ever. Books are perishable; souls are immortal. What is written "in fleshy tables of the heart" can never be erased. Let us, therefore, seek to communicate truth unto men, and to inspire men with the passion for the attainment of truth.

IV. That present progress is promoted by the recollection of God's past doings.

We infer this from the use which the Israelites made of "the book of the wars of Jehovah." The quotation from this book is very obscure. Of the first clause Dr. A. Clarke says, "This clause is impenetrably obscure." The passage from the book is "a reference rather than a quotation. Contemporaries who had 'the Book of the Wars of Jehovah' at hand, could of

course supply the context." But supposing the book was what we take it to have been, a collection of odes celebrating the glorious acts of Jehovah for the Israelites; then we are warranted in affirming that they took courage in the present by the consideration of what He had done for them in the past.

Former victories inspired them with resolution and hope. (c)

In our pilgrimage let us cultivate this spirit. Let the light which shines from the mercies already received cheer our spirits as we advance to meet the duties and difficulties, the burdens and battles, that lie before us.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When we look back over a lengthened series of years, we seldom find that remembrance clings fondly to moments in which the mind has been most agitated, the passions most active, but rather to the intervals in which hour stole on hour with the same quiet tread. The transitory fever of the senses it is only a diseased imagination that ponders over and recalls; the triumphs which flatter our self-esteem look pale and obsolete from the distance of years, as arches of lath and plaster, thrown up in haste for the march of a conqueror, seem frail and tawdry when we see them in after time, spanning the solid thoroughfares with columns already mouldering, and stripped of the banners and the garlands that had clad them in the bravery of an hour.

However varied the course of our life, whatsoever the phases of pleasure and ambition through which it has swept along, still, when in memory we would revive the times that were comparatively the happiest, those times would be found to have been the calmest.

As the body for health needs regularity in habits, and will even reconcile itself to habits not in themselves best fitted for longevity, with less injury to the system than might result from abrupt changes to the training by which athletes attain their vigour—so the mind for health needs a certain clockwork of routine; we like to look forward with a certain tranquil sentiment of security; when we pause from the occupation of to-day, which custom has made dear to us, there is a charm in the mechanical confidence with which we think that the same occupation will be renewed at the same hour to-morrow. And thus monotony itself is a cause and element of happiness which, amidst the shifting tumults of the world, we are apt to ignore. Plutarch, indeed, says truly that "the shoe takes the form of the foot, not the foot the form of the shoe," meaning thereby that "man's life is moulded by the disposition of his soul." But new shoes chafe the feet, new customs the soul. The stoutest pedestrian would flag on a long walk if he put on new shoes at every second mile.

It is with a sentiment of misplaced pity, perhaps of contempt still more irrational, that the busy man, whose existence is loud and noisy, views another who seems to him less to live than to vegetate. The traveller, whirled from capital to capital, stops for a night's

lodging at some convent rising lone amidst unfrequented hills. He witnesses the discipline of the monastic life drilled into unvarying forms, day and year portioned out, according to inch scale, by the chimes of the undeviating bell. He re-enters his carriage with a sense of relief; how dreary must be the existence he leaves behind! Why dreary? Because so monotonous. Shallow reasoner! it is the monotony that has reconciled the monk to his cell. Even prisoners, after long years, have grown attached to the sameness of their prison, and have shrunk back from the novelty of freedom when turned loose upon the world. Not that these illustrations constitute a plea for monastery or prison; they but serve to show that monotony, even under circumstances least favourable to the usual elements of happiness, becomes a happiness in itself, growing, as it were, unseen, out of the undisturbed certainty of peculiar customs. As the pleasure the ear finds in rhyme is said to arise from its recurrence at measured periods—from the gratified expectation that at certain intervals certain effects will be repeated—so it is in life: the recurrence of things same or similar, the content in the fulfilment of expectations so familiar and so gentle that we are scarcely conscious that they were formed, have a harmony and a charm, and, where life is enriched by no loftier genius, often make the only difference between its poetry and its prose.—*From "Caxtoniana," by Lord Lytton.*

(b) Day by day, hour by hour, the work goes on—well or ill—to His praise or to His shame. We must build. We are building. We are very apt sometimes to think that we have done nothing, and that that is the worst of it. That is *not* the worst of it. The worst of it is that *we have* done something very poor or very ill. I come home at night, and say, with sad relenting, as the shadows of reflection deepen around me, "I have done nothing at the great building to-day!" O yes, but I have. I have been putting in "the wood, the hay, the stubble," where "the silver and the gold and the precious stones" should have been. I have been piling up fuel for the last fires in my own life. I cannot be a cipher even for one day. I must be a man. Nay, I must be a Christian man, faithful or unfaithful. I must grow, and build, and work, and live in some way. Oh, then, let me see that

I live for Christ, that I grow into His image, and that I work a work in the moral construction of my own life which angels will crown and God will bless !—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) The way to enrich life is to keep a retentive memory in the heart. Look over a period of twenty years, and see the all-covering and ever-shining mercy of God ! How many special providences have you observed ? How many narrow escapes have you experienced ? How many difficulties have you surmounted ? How often have you found a pool

in unexpected places ? We should lay up some memory of the Divine triumphs which have gladdened our lives, and fall back upon it for inspiration and courage in the dark and cloudy day. Go into your yesterdays to find God ! Search for Him in the paths along which you have come, and if you dare, under the teaching of your own memories, deny His goodness, then betake yourselves to the infamous luxury of distrust and reproach.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

A SONG OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

(Verses 16-20.)

Dean Perowne makes the following remarks concerning this song which Israel sang at Beer :—"The next is a song which was sung on the digging of a well at a spot where they were encamped, and which from this circumstance was called Beër, or 'The Well.' It runs as follows :—

"Spring up, O well ! sing ye to it ;
Well, which the princes dug,
Which the nobles of the people bored
With the sceptre-of-office, with their
staves."

This song, first sung at the digging of the well, was afterwards no doubt commonly used by those who came to draw water. The maidens of Israel chanted it to one another, verse by verse, as they toiled at the bucket, and thus beguiled their labour. 'Spring up, O well !' was the burden or refrain of the song, which would pass from one mouth to another at each fresh coil of the rope, till the full bucket reached the well's mouth. But the peculiar charm of the song lies not only in its antiquity, but in the characteristic touch which so manifestly connects it with the life of the time to which the narrative assigns it. The one point which is dwelt upon is, that the leaders of the people took their part in the work, that they themselves helped to dig the well. In the new generation who were about to enter the Land of Promise, a strong feeling of sympathy between the people and their rulers had sprung up,

which augured well for the future, and which left its stamp even on the ballads and songs of the time. This little carol is fresh and lusty with young life ; it sparkles like the water of the well whose springing up first occasioned it ; it is the expression on the part of those who sung it, of lively confidence in the sympathy and co-operation of their leaders, which, manifested in this one instance, might be relied upon in all emergencies (*Ewald, Gesch. ii. 264, 5*).—*Bibl. Dict.*

Three homiletic points are suggested by the verses under consideration.

I. The needs of human pilgrimage.

The people at Beer wanted water. They were receiving reminders of their dependence almost constantly. It is so with the pilgrimages of human life to-day. We pass from place to place, but we never cease to be dependent. Notice—

1. How *indispensable* are the things which we need ! The Israelites wanted water, a thing which is absolutely essential to human existence. We are dependent upon God for many things, both for the body and for the soul, which are thoroughly necessary to our well-being, and even to our life.

2. How *many* are the things which we need ! Who could write the catalogue of man's necessities ? (*a*)

3. How *constant* are our needs ! We may change our place and our circumstances, but we never change our dependent condition. Both physically and

spiritually we are ever drawing from the fountain of Divine blessings. (*b*)

Our constant dependence should beget constant humility.

II. The Divine provision for the needs of human pilgrimage.

The Divine provision for the Israelites at Beer—

1. *Was promised by God.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Jehovah anticipated the need of His people. "Thou comest to meet him with the blessings of goodness." God designed and promised the provision before it was asked. How munificent is the provision which He makes for the needs of His creatures! (1) In material things. The earth and sea bring forth an abundant supply for the needs of all men. "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (*c*) (2) In spiritual things. "He will abundantly pardon." "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," &c. (Psa. ciii. 3-5, 8). "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," &c. (2 Cor. ix. 8, 11). "The unsearchable riches of Christ." He "is able to do exceeding abundantly," &c. The fountain of Gospel blessings is inexhaustible, infinite. (*d*) And, as in the water of Beer, so also in the blessings of salvation, the provision preceded the need. Redemption was not an afterthought of the Divine mind. The cross was set up in eternity. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

2. *Was bestowed in connection with human effort.* A well was dug under the direction of Moses, who was himself directed by God, and in this way the Lord fulfilled His promise to give them water. God provides for man by means of man's own efforts. If man would obtain temporal blessings, the Divine rule is that he must work for them. "If any man would not work, neither should he eat" (comp. 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. iii. 8-13). In spiritual things also God blesses man by the use of the means of blessing. If we would enjoy the bounteous provision of the Heavenly Father for the supply of our

spiritual needs, we must read, meditate, pray, work, &c.

It is noteworthy that the princes and nobles took a prominent part in the effort to obtain this water (see the remarks of Perowne on this point, quoted above). A glad zeal and a hearty co-operation amongst all ranks seemed to have possessed the people. It is well when the leading people of a community are leaders in excellent service, &c. (*e*)

3. *Enkindled human joy;* and this joy was expressed in this song. The music of our pilgrimage which honours God is that of songs, not dirges. Our glad and grateful anthems are acceptable unto Him. (*f*)

4. *Was suitably commemorated.* The name of the place was called *Beër*, the well. We commemorate our *Marahs*, let us do the same with our *Beërs*. Let us be eager to perpetuate the memory of our mercies.

III. The continuousness of human pilgrimage.

"And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; and from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon." Even scenes of refreshment and joy must not detain them. The well which afforded them so much satisfaction and pleasure was not the goal of their pilgrimage. *Beër* was not *Canaan*. Onward must they go until they reach the Promised Land. In our life-pilgrimage we may, as it were, halt, but we must not settle in this world. If we attempt to settle here God speedily sends some messenger crying to us, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (*g*)

"Onward then, right onward!
This our watchword still,
Till we reach the glory
Of the wondrous hill.

"On through waste and blackness,
O'er this desert road:
On till Salem greets us,
City of our God."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Does not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of Divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now exist upon it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) We never wake up in the morning but we want strength for the day, and we never go to bed at night without needing grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life: when we begin with Christ in our young days we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth; in middle life our needs are greater still, lest the cares of this world should eat as doth a canker; and in old age we are needy still, and need preserving grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die we need our last bed to be made for us by mercy, and our last hour to be cheered by grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity we should have no place to dwell in. We are as full of wants as the sea is full of water. We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door, and we must go out a-begging again. Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment, and dog our heels in every place.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) There is not a word on our tongue; there is not a thought in our heart, but lo! O Jesus, Son of man, Thou knowest it *altogether!* And, knowing it, has He left it unprovided for? See what He has done for the recruiting of man's physical strength, and then say if He who can be so careful about restoring the body would leave the recovery of the mind and soul altogether unprovided for. He has answered that every day and eventide. He sends a cooling shadow over the earth, and, as it wraps all things in its darkness, it seems to say, "Rest awhile." See how above every weekday He has set that singing, shining Sabbath Day of His, to quiet men, to give them a moment's rest in the great strife and chase of life! If He has made an evening to each day—a sabbath to each week—if He has in many ways shown an interest in men's bones, muscles, nerves, and sinews, has He forgotten the immortal soul? has He made no answer to the cry of the heart when it is weary and sad, when it sighs for release and rest? His whole life is an answer to that enquiry. "Come unto Me," said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He meets us, therefore, at every point. He provides for the aching limb, and answers the sigh of the weary heart!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) It is no small task to water one garden, in the heat of the summer time, so that every flower shall be refreshed, and no plant overlooked. How great is the might of Him, who

from the salt sea extracts the precious clouds of sweet rain, to fall not only on gardens, but on the pastures of the wilderness, and the wild forest trees, till all nature laughs for joy, the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands! Brethren, it is a great thing to put a cup of cold water to the lips of a disciple; it shall not lose its reward. To refresh the bowels of one of God's saints is no mean thing; but how great is God's goodness, which puts a cup of salvation to every Christian's lips, which waters every plant of His right hand planting, so that every one can have his leaf continually green, and his fruit ever brought forth in due season.

—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) For an illustration on the point see p. 13.

(f) It is always a token of a revival of religion, it is said, when there is a revival of psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear ploughmen at the plough-tail singing Luther's psalms. Whitfield and Wesley had never done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry, and for the singing of such men as Toplady, and Scott, and Newton, and many others of the same class; and even now we mark that since there has been somewhat of a religious revival in our denominations, there are more hymn books than ever there were, and far more attention is paid to Christian psalmody than before. When your heart is full of Christ, you will want to sing. It is a blessed thing to sing at your labour and work, if you are in a place where you can do so; and if the world should laugh at you, you must tell them that you have as good a right to sing the songs that delight your heart as they have to sing any of the songs in which their hearts delight. Praise His name, Christians; be not dumb; sing aloud unto Jesus the Lamb; and if we as Englishmen can sometimes sing our national air, let us as believers have our national hymn, and sing—

"Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all."

—*Ibid.*

(g) A father with his little son is journeying overland to California; and when, at night, he pitches his tent in some pleasant valley, the child is charmed with the spot, and begs his father to rear a house and remain there; and he begins to make a little fence about the tent, and digs up the wild-flowers, and plants them within the enclosure. But the father says, "No, my son. Our home is far distant. Let these things go; for to-morrow we must depart." Now, God is taking us, His children, as pilgrims and strangers, homewards; but we desire to build here, and must be often overthrown before we can learn to seek the "city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."—*H. W. Beecher.*

A stranger is very well known, not perhaps in the great city where there are always thousands of such, but in a country town or on a

country road. See him as he enters the village at nightfall; you can see at once he is not of the place. The dust is on his raiment; he is footsore and weary; yet he has no mind to stay—he will be away again before the inhabitants are up. His language is different; his questions

are those of one who has but a superficial and momentary interest in the answer that may be given; his very look is the life spelling of the word “onward;” his home, wherever it may be, is not here.—A. Raleigh, D.D.

A SONG AT THE WELLHEAD.

(Verses 16-18.)

I. These people required water as we greatly need grace, and there was a promise given concerning the supply.

“The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

1. The supply promised here *was a Divine supply*. “I will give them water.” The supply of grace that you are to receive in your time of need is a Divine supply. Hence, knowing the attributes of God, you will understand that however much you may require, there will be an all-sufficient supply; however long you may require it, there will be an everlasting supply; at whatever hours you may want it, there will be an available supply.

2. *It was a suitable supply*. The people were thirsty, and the promise was, “I will give them water.” Like a father, God understands His children better than His children understand themselves, and He gives not according to their foolish guesses of what they need, but according to His wise apprehension of what they require.

3. The supply promised was an *abundant supply*. “I will give them water.” It included every child of Israel, every babe that needed it, as well as every strong man that thirsted after it. No child of God shall be left to perish for want of the necessary supplies.

4. It was a *sure supply*. “I will give them water.” We do not go forward on the strength of “ifs,” and “buts,” and “peradventures;” but we advance confidently, invigorated and inflamed, as to our courage, by “wills” and “shalls.” God must un-deify Himself before He can break His promises.

II. Observe, the song.

The children of Israel sing this song,

“Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.”

1. This song may be looked upon as *the voice of cheerfulness*. There was no water, but they were still in good spirits. Cheerfulness in want, cheerfulness upon the bed of pain, cheerfulness under slander, singing, like the nightingale, in the night, praising God when the thorn is in the breast, this is a high Christian attainment, which we should seek after and not be content without.

2. I like, too, the look of these children of Israel, *singing to the Lord before the water came*, praising Him while they were yet thirsty. Let us pitch a tune and join with them, however low our estate may be.

3. This song was the voice of *cheerfulness sustained by faith*. They believed the promise, “Gather the people together,” &c. They sang the song of expectation. Sing of the mercy yet to come, which your faith can see, although as yet you have not received it.

4. This song was no doubt *greatly increased in its volume, and more elevated in its tone, when the water did begin to spring*. All ye who have received anything of Divine grace, sing ye unto it! Bless God by singing and praising His name while you are receiving His favours.

III. The song was a prayer.

“Spring up, O well,” was Faith’s way of singing her prayer.

1. This prayer *went at once to the work, and sought for that which was required*. What was needed? Not a well, but water. Now what we need is not the means of grace, but the grace of the means. You are retired for your private devotions; you have opened the Bible; you begin to

read. Now, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter. Words are nothing: the letter killeth. The business of the believer with his Bible open is to pray, "Here is the well: spring up, O well; Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of Thy Word," &c. Or perhaps you are about to kneel down to pray. You want in prayer not the well so much as the springing up of the well. And it is just the same when you go to the ordinances. . . . And is it not the same when you come to the public assembly? Let our prayer be like the song of the text, direct and to the point. Lord, do not put me off with the husks of ordinances and means of grace; give me Thyself.

2. *This prayer was the prayer of faith*, like the song. Faith gives wings to our prayers, so that they fly heaven-high; but unbelief clogs and chains our prayers to earth. If you want some well to spring up to supply the needs of yourself and your family, pray in faith; the rock, if needs be, shall flow with rivers of water.

3. It was *united prayer*. All the people prayed, "Spring up, O well!" The prayer was a unanimous one.

IV. Then they went to work.

"I will give them water," but "the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it," &c.

1. When God intends to bless a people, *effort is always esteemed to be honourable*. "The princes digged," &c. They were not ashamed of the work. And when God shall bless a church and people, they must all feel that it is a very great honour to do anything in the service of God. Our highest dignity is to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It was *effort which was accomplished by very feeble means*. They digged the well with their staves—not very first-class tools. But they did as they were told. We must dig as we can. We must use what abilities we have. If you have but one talent, use that one talent.

3. It was *effort in God's order*. They digged the well "by the direction of the lawgiver." We must not forget in everything we do for God, to go to work in God's way.

4. It was *effort made in faith*. They digged the well, but as they digged it they felt so certain that the water would come that they sang at the work, "Spring up, O well!" This is the true way to work if we would get a blessing.—C. H. Spurgeon.

THE OVERTHROW OF THE AMORITES; OR, THE DEFEAT OF "THE PEOPLE THAT DELIGHT IN WAR."

(Verses 21-26.)

The following points in this portion of the history may be considered with advantage.

I. A reasonable request preferred.

"And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, let me pass," &c. (vers. 21, 22). The same request was sent by them on a former occasion to the king of Edom (chap. xx. 17). This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself*. "Let me pass through thy land." (On this and the next subdivision see pp. 376, 377.)

2. *Enforced by satisfactory assurances*. "We will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; we will go

along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders."

II. A hostile refusal returned.

"And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together," &c. (ver. 23). The reasons which led the king of the Amorites to adopt this line of action were probably partly those which led the king of the Edomites to oppose their passing through his country; e.g., fear that they should receive some injury from the Israelites if they granted their request, and envy of their growing power (see pp. 376, 377). On receiving the request Sihon gathered his people together, and marched against Israel.

Not content with opposing their march through his territory, "he went out against Israel into the wilderness; and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel." He was the aggressor in the war; and his assault was entirely unprovoked. It is an evil thing when kings and their advisers are so eager to make war. (a)

III. An unprovoked assault ending in an unmitigated defeat.

"And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land," &c. (vers. 24, 25). If, like one in modern times, Sihon entered upon the conflict "with a light heart," he soon exchanged it for a heavy and bitter heart. The battle was his last. He and all his host were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." His defeat and destruction were a just retribution for his unprovoked and hasty assault upon Israel. (b)

IV. A great victory obtained by those who had in vain asked for a small favour.

Israel had asked as a favour that they might be allowed to pass through

the land of the Amorites, who in reply went out to war against them; "and Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok," &c. Their modest request for permission to pass through the land was brutally refused, and, now having been forced into battle, they take possession of the land as their own. Moderation of request or demand is far more likely to be followed by large attainments than unreasonable requests or extravagant demands. An attitude of bluster and swagger generally leads to defeat and humiliation.

V. A territory which had been obtained by conquest lost by defeat.

"For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon." A policy of aggression often leads to enforced retrogression. That which has been obtained by force is often lost by reason of the opposition of a superior force. Righteous and beneficent government is the best security of an empire. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well

To extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infants and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.

—Cowper.

(b) Moses sent messengers unto Sihon, desiring that he would grant his army a passage, upon what security he should please to require; he promised that he should be no way injured, neither as to that country which Sihon governed, nor as to its inhabitants; and that he would buy his provisions at such a price as should be to their advantage, even though he should desire to sell them their very water. But Sihon refused his offer, and put his army into battle array, and was preparing everything in order to hinder their passing over Arnon.

When Moses saw that the Amorite king was disposed to enter upon hostilities with them, he thought he ought not to bear that insult; and, determining to wean the Hebrews from their indolent temper, and prevent the disorders which arose thence, which had been the occasion of their former sedition (nor indeed were they

now thoroughly easy in their minds), he inquired of God, whether he would give him leave to fight? which when he had done, and God also promised him the victory, he was himself very courageous, and ready to proceed to fighting. Accordingly he encouraged the soldiers; and he desired of them that they would take the pleasure of fighting, now God gave them leave so to do. They then upon the receipt of this permission, which they so much longed for, put on their whole armour, and set about the work without delay. But the Amorite king was not now like to himself when the Hebrews were ready to attack him; but both he himself was affrighted at the Hebrews, and his army, which before had showed themselves to be of good courage, were then found to be timorous: so they could not sustain the first onset, nor bear up against the Hebrews, but fled away, as thinking this would afford them a more likely way for their escape than fighting; for they depended upon their cities, which were strong, from which yet they reaped no advantage when they were forced to fly to them; for as soon as the Hebrews saw them giving ground, they immediately pursued them close; and when they had broken their ranks, they greatly terrified them, and some of

them broke off from the rest, and ran away to the cities. Now the Hebrews pursued them briskly, and obstinately persevered in the labours they had already undergone; and being very skilful in slinging, and very dexterous in throwing of darts, or anything else of that kind; and also having nothing but light armour, which made them quick in the pursuit, they overtook their enemies; and for those that were most remote, and could not be overtaken, they reached them by their slings and their bows, so that many were slain; and those that escaped the slaughter were sorely wounded, and these were more distressed with thirst than with any of those that fought against them, for it was the summer season; and when the greatest number of them were brought down to the river out of a desire to drink, as also when others fled away by troops, the Hebrews came round them, and shot at them; so that, what with darts and what with arrows, they made a slaughter of them all. Sihon their king was also slain. So the Hebrews spoiled the dead bodies, and took their prey. The land also which they took was full of abundance of fruits, and the army went all over it without fear, and fed their cattle upon it; and they took the enemies prisoners, for they could no way put a stop to them, since all the fighting

men were destroyed. Such was the destruction which overtook the Amorites, who were neither sagacious in counsel, nor courageous in action. Hereupon the Hebrews took possession of their land, which is a country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembling an island: the river Arnon being its southern limit; the river Jabbok determining its northern side, which, running into the Jordan, loses its own name, and takes the other; while Jordan itself runs along by it on its western coast.—*Josephus, Ant. v. 5.*

(c) There is one thing too apt to be forgotten, which it much behoves us to remember: in the Colonies, as everywhere else in this world, the vital point is not who decides, but what is decided on! That measures tending really to the best advantage, temporal and spiritual, of the Colony be adopted, and strenuously put in execution; there lies the grand interest of every good citizen, British and Colonial. Such measures, whosoever have originated and prescribed them, will gradually be sanctioned by all men and gods; and clamours of every kind in reference to them may safely to a great extent be neglected, as clamorous merely, and sure to be transient.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

LESSONS FROM AN ANCIENT WAR SONG.

(Verses 27-32.)

For the interpretation of these verses see *Explanatory and Critical Notes.*

These verses suggest reflections on—

I. The triumphs of warriors.

1. *Their selfishness.* “Come ye to Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and established.” Warriors think only of their own cities and of the interests of their own country and people; to secure these they do not hesitate to outrage the most sacred rights of other peoples. (a)

2. *Their destructiveness.* “For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it hath consumed Ar of Moab.” (b)

3. *Their cruelty.* “It hath consumed the lords of the high places of Arnon.” (c).

II. The vanity of idols.

“Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh! he hath given up his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, unto Sihon king of the Amorites.” Chemosh, the

national god of the Moabites, in whom they trusted, failed to deliver them from the power of the Amorites (comp. Psa. cxxxv. 15-18; Isa. xlv. 9-20). An illustration of every object in which man reposes his supreme trust, except the Lord God. The idols of our age and country are wealth, power, pleasure, friendship, knowledge, wisdom; excellent things in themselves and in their place; but utterly vain when pursued and trusted as the chief good of man. They cannot deliver in the day of trouble, &c. Only God is worthy of our entire and unlimited confidence.

III. The discomfiture of conquerors.

“We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there.” The Amorites had vanquished the

Moabites and seized much of their territory; they also went out against Israel; but now Israel has vanquished them and taken their territory. The victor is now vanquished; the spoiler is now spoiled. How often has this been repeated in subsequent times! What

a striking illustration we have of it in Napoleon Bonaparte! (*d*)

IV. The insecurity of earthly possessions.

"Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." "Worldly inheritances are continually changing their masters."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) The spirit of all rulers and nations towards foreign states is partial, unjust. Individuals may be disinterested; but nations have no feeling of the tie of brotherhood to their race. A base selfishness is the principle on which the affairs of nations are commonly conducted. A statesman is expected to take advantage of the weaknesses and wants of other countries. How loose a morality governs the intercourse of states! What falsehoods and intrigues are licensed by diplomacy! What nation regards another with true friendship? What nation makes sacrifices to another's good? What nation is as anxious to perform its duties, as to assert its rights? What nation chooses to suffer wrong rather than inflict it? What nation lays down the everlasting law of right, casts itself fearlessly on its principles, and chooses to be poor or to perish rather than to do wrong? Can communities so selfish, so unfriendly, so unprincipled, so unjust, be expected to wage righteous wars? Especially if with this selfishness are joined national prejudices, antipathies, and exasperated passions, what else can be expected in the public policy but inhumanity and crime? An individual, we know, cannot be trusted in his own cause to measure his own claims, to avenge his own wrongs; and the civil magistrate, an impartial umpire, has been substituted as the only means of justice. But nations are even more unfit than individuals to judge in their own cause; more prone to push their rights to excess, and to trample on the rights of others; because nations are crowds, and crowds are unawed by opinion, and more easily inflamed by sympathy into madness. Is there not, then, always a presumption against the justice of war?—*W. E. Channing, D.D.*

(*b*) Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villagers in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathise with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of Heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants

flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

(*c*) You may see what war is, as you mark tens and hundreds of thousands of men, made after the image of God, rushing together to tear and destroy each other with more than the fury of wild beasts. You may see what it is in the miserable crowds of innocent men, women, and children that are flying from their homes to perish, in too many instances, by famine, and the pestilence which famine breeds. You may see what it is, in devastated fields, where the bounty of Providence had blessed man with abundance, which now lies trampled in the mire, or remains rotting and ungathered, because the tide of war has rolled over the country. You will see what it is, in the bombarded towns, in the sacked and desolate houses, in the burned and battered villages, where a few of the unfortunate inhabitants may be seen prowling like famished wolves amid the ruins of their homes, to see if they can pick some morsel of food to save themselves from starvation. You may see what it is, in the heaps of decaying human corpses that taint the air with corruption, or are eaten by dogs which won't be scared away from their loathsome feast. You may see what it is, in the still sadder spectacle of scores and hundreds of wounded men lying for hours and days where they fell, with no eye to pity and no hand to succour, and sometimes slain in their wounds by men worse than wild beasts, who haunt the battle-field for plunder and spoil. You may hear what war is, in the wild cry of vengeance and fury, more terrible than the howl of the wolf or the roar of the lion as he springs on his prey, with which men hurl themselves into deadly strife; in the groans of the wounded, as they lie, mercilessly trampled beneath the feet of their comrades, or the prancing hoofs of horses that rush over them unheeded; in the shrieks of women, rushing with dishevelled hair and eyes starting out of their sockets in the agony of terror, as they flee

from outrage worse than death before the face of brutal soldiers, drunk with blood and lust; in the piteous wails of little infants tossed on the points of bayonets, or nailed alive to the doors of their parents' houses. This is war. Yes; this is war. It is not the minister of justice; it is not the redresser of wrong; it is not the vindicator of right. To borrow Coleridge's words:—

"War is a monster all with blood defiled,
That from the aged father tears his child:
A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,
Who slays the sire and starves the son,
The husband slays, and from her hoard
Steals what his widow's toil hath won.
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day."

—Henry Richard.

(d) Where is the man at whose nod nations lately trembled, at whose pleasure kings held their thrones, and whose voice, more desolating

than the whirlwind, directed the progress of ravaging armies? A little island now holds this conqueror of the world. No crowd is there to do him homage. His ear is no longer soothed with praise. The glare which power threw around him is vanished. The terror of his name is past. His abject fall has even robbed him of that admiration which is sometimes forced upon us by the stern, proud spirit, which adversity cannot subdue. Contempt and pity are all the tribute he now receives from the world he subdued. If we can suppose that his life of guilt has left him any moral feeling, what anguish must he carry into the silence and solitude to which he is doomed. From the fields of battle which he has strewn with wounded and slain, from the kingdoms and families which he has desolated; the groans of the dying, the curses of the injured, the wailing of the bereaved, must pierce his retreat, and overwhelm him with remorse and agony.
—W. E. Channing, D.D.

THE BATTLE OF EDREI, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

(Verses 33-35.)

We have here an illustration of the following great truths—

I. The Christian has to contend against a most formidable adversary.

"Og the king of Bashan and all his people" were a most powerful enemy to encounter. Many of their "cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars." The message of Jehovah unto Moses, "Fear him not," &c., implies that the Israelites were deeply sensible that they were about to encounter a powerful antagonist. In battling against evil the Christian has to do with a mighty foe. Thoughtless persons may speak lightly of the vitality and strength of evil; but no one who has ever earnestly contended with it can do so. See St. Paul's estimate of it (Eph. vi. 10-18). And St. Peter's (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). And St. Jude's (Jude 3, 20-24). The formidableness of the adversary of the Christian may be seen as regards,—

1. *Sin in ourselves.* The complete victory of the Christian life often involves painful and protracted warfare (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; 2 Cor. ix. 3-5; Heb. xii. 1-4). (a)

2. *Evil in the world.* Think of the moral darkness and death in heathen

lands; and in our own country, of the criminal classes; of the multitudes who, though not criminal, are irreligious; of the drunkenness, the commercial dishonesty, the social corruptions, the religious formality, &c. Let any one attempt to grapple with any one of these forms of evil, and he will need no argument to convince him that true Christians are battling against a mighty adversary. (b)

II. The Christian in his conflict is inspired with the most encouraging assurance.

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Fear him not;" &c. It has been well pointed out in the *Biblical Museum*, that "they were likely to fear, since—1. They had before them a powerful foe, warlike and well posted; 2. They were weakened by previous battles; 3. They had enemies behind and before them." And we know as a matter of fact that they did fear the encounter. "The giant stature of Og, and the power and bravery of his people, excited a dread which God Himself alleviated by His encouragement to Moses before the battle, and the memory of this victory lingered long in the national memory (Ps. cxxxv. 11; cxxxvi. 20)." The encouragement given to Israel illus-

trates that which is given to Christians in their conflict with evil. Notice—

1. *The assurance.* "I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land." Christians are assured of victory over sin (comp. John xvi. 33; Rom. viii. 35-39; xvi. 20; 1 John iv. 4; v. 4, 5). (c)

2. *The example.* "Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon, king of the Amorites," &c. Past victories should inspire us with courage and fortitude in present conflicts (comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 34-37; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). (d)

3. *The exhortation.* "Fear him not." Enforced by such an assurance from such a Being, and by so recent and striking an example, this exhortation must have carried with it great power. Christian soldier, "fear not! for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

III. The Christian in his conflict shall obtain a most complete victory.

"So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people," &c. This illustrates the Christian victory in at least two respects:—

1. *The destruction of their enemies.* The Christian shall be victorious over evil in himself. He shall be presented "faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And the Christian cause shall triumph in the world. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under His feet." "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

2. *Their enrichment by the destruction of their enemies.* "And they possessed his land." "All the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took a prey to ourselves" (Deut. iii. 7). So Christians "are more than conquerors through Him that loved" them. The Christian is a gainer by reason of his moral battles; he comes out of the conflict greatly enriched with the most precious spiritual spoils. His wisdom, his strength, his courage, the very noblest qualities of his manhood, are all increased and perfected in the arduous strife with sin.

Christian soldiers, onward bravely to the battle, and quail not in its fiercest strife; for through the Captain of your salvation, a splendid triumph shall be yours. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When men are swimming with the tide, how easy it is! They seem to themselves, oh! how lithe and springy. But let them turn round and attempt to swim back, and they will find that it is quite a different matter. There is many and many a man whose conviction of danger comes with his attempt to turn back on habit.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease, wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them; the dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood, these are for those who go a soldiering; and swords all hacked, and dented armour, and bruised shields, these are the things that mark the good, the practical soldier. Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a life-work for Christ, actually to win souls, this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian. A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night perhaps the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle, just at the time when he is most weary, and he must away to the attack just when he would

best prefer to take his rest in sleep. The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country; always needing to stand on his watch-tower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood, with far worse foes, namely, with spiritual wickednesses in high places.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The fight may seem to hang in the scales to-day, but the conquest is sure to come unto Him whose right it is. He shall gather all the sceptres of kings beneath his arm in one mighty sheaf, and take their diadems from off their brows, and be Himself crowned with many crowns, for God hath said it, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but every promise of His must and shall be fulfilled. Push on, then, through hosts of enemies, ye warriors of the Cross. Fight up the hill, ye soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust. Ye may not see your banner just now, neither do ye hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away, and you shall gain the summit of the hill, and your foes shall fly before you, and the King Himself shall come, and you shall be rewarded who have continued steadfast in His service.—*Ibid.*

(d) The desert was to Christ a holy place,

after the initial battle; the sight of the old footmarks inspired His depressed heart; the echoes of the victorious quotations became as voices of promise. In the first instance, He was led up of the Spirit to be tempted: often afterwards He was led up of the Spirit into the same wilderness to be comforted. So all through human life; recollection becomes inspiration, and memory speaks to the soul like a prophet of the Lord.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 407.

Sir Francis Drake, being in a dangerous storm in the Thames, was heard to say, "Must I, who have escaped the rage of the ocean, be drowned in a ditch!" Will you, experienced saints, who have passed through a world of tribulation, lie down and die of despair, or give up your profession because you are at the present moment passing through some light affliction? Let your past preservation inspire you with courage and constrain you to brave all storms for Jesus' sake.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world. The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb; the swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords. What! soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory, wouldst thou have it said that thou didst turn thy back in the day of battle? Dost thou not wish to have a share in the conflict, that thou mayest have a share in the victory? If thou hast even the hottest part of the battle, wilt thou flinch and fly? Thou shalt have the brightest part of the victory if thou art in the fiercest of the conflict. Wilt thou turn and lose thy laurels? Wilt thou throw down thy sword? Shall it be with thee as when a standard-bearer fainteth? Nay, man, up to arms again! for the victory is certain. Though the conflict be severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, ye lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more! for ye shall yet be crowned with immortal glory.—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the last division of this Book, which comprises fifteen chapters (xxii.-xxxvi.).

"In the steppes of Moab the Israelites encamped upon the border of the Promised Land, from which they were only separated by the Jordan. But before this boundary line could be passed, there were many preparations that had to be made. In the first place, the whole congregation was to pass through a trial of great importance to all future generations, as bearing upon the relation in which it stood to the heathen world; and in the second place, it was here that Moses, who was not to enter Canaan because of his sin at the water of strife, was to bring the work of legislation to a close before his death, and not only to issue the requisite instructions concerning the conquest of the promised inheritance, and the division of it among the tribes of Israel, but to impress once more upon the hearts of the whole congregation the essential contents of the whole law, with all that the Lord had done for Israel, that they might be confirmed in their fidelity to the Lord, and pre-

served from the danger of apostasy. This last work of the faithful servant of God, with which he brought his mediatorial work to a close, is described in the book of Deuteronomy; whilst the laws relating to the conquest and partition of Canaan, with the experience of Israel in the steppes of Moab, fill up the latter portion of the present book."

—*Keil and Del.*

In this and the succeeding two chapters we have the record of Balaam and his prophecies.

Verse 1. "*The plains.* Heb. *araboth*; the word is the plural of that which is used to denote the whole depressed tract along the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and onward, where it is still called the Arabah, to the Elanitic gulf. Near the mouth of the Jordan this tract is about eleven miles across, a breadth of from four to five miles being on the eastern bank. The space occupied by the Israelitish camp consisted, in the main, of a large and luxuriant oasis upon this bank, slightly raised above the barren flat, sultry because sheltered by the Peraean hills which bear up the fertile plateau above, and watered by

the brooks which, descending from those hills, run westward across the plain into the Jordan (see Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' pp. 528 sqq.).—*Speaker's Comm.*

Plains of Moab : See on xxi. 20.

On this side Jordan by Jericho. Keil and Del. translate, "Beyond the Jordan of Jericho."

Verse 2. *Balak* = waster, destroyer.—*Fuerst.*

Zippor = a bird.

Verse 3. "*Was distressed because of.* Lit. 'shrank from before them' in terror."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 4. *Midian.* "The Midianites, who are referred to here, must be distinguished from the branch of the same tribe which dwelt in the peninsula of Sinai (chap. x. 29, 30; Exod. ii. 15, 16; iii. 1). They had been settled for a long time (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 35) on the eastern border of the Moabitish and Amoritish territory, in a grassy but treeless steppe-land—where many ruins and wells are still to be found belonging to very ancient times—and lived by grazing (chap. xxxi. 32, sqq.) and the caravan trade. They were not very warlike, and were not only defeated by the Edomites (Gen. xxxvi. 35), but were also subdued and rendered tributary by Sihon, king of the Amorites."—*Keil and Del.*

"*The elders of Midian* are heads of tribes who administered the general affairs of the people, who, like the Israelites, lived under a patriarchal constitution. The most powerful of them bore the title of 'kings' (chap. xxxi. 8) or 'princes' (Josh. xiii. 21).—*Ibid.*

Verse 5. *Balaam* = "devourer of the people" (*Hengstenberg*); or, "one not belonging to the people, i.e., a foreigner; or, conqueror, corrupter of the people."—*Fuerst.*

Beor is regarded by many as derived from בָּעַר, to burn, to consume.

Fuerst says it signifies shepherd, and is from בָּעַר, cattle. In 2 Pet. ii. 15 the name is written Bosor.

"*Pethor, which is by the river, &c.* Rather, 'which was on the river' (i.e., the Euphrates, so called here and elsewhere by pre-eminence) 'in his native land.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Pethor was a city of Mesopotamia (Deut. xxiii. 4) on the Euphrates. Its site is unknown.

Verse 7. *Rewards of divination.* "The soothsayers' wages" (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 15).

Verse 15. *Princes, more, and more honourable*; i.e., more in number and of more exalted rank, and with more splendid presents or proffers of reward.

Verse 36. *A city of Moab.* Heb., *Ir-Moab.* See on chap. xxi. 15.

Verse 39. *Kirjath-huzoth.* Margin: "a city of streets." *Fuerst*: "city of the steppes." From the context, it was "apparently within Balak's dominions, and therefore south of the Arnon. Hardly however far south, for from it, on the morrow, the company proceeded to Bamoth-Baal, which lay north of the Arnon. It was probably a place of importance, and possibly that of Balak's residence. . . . All the conditions implied as to the site of Kirjath-huzoth in the Scriptural notice of it are satisfied by the ruins of Shihân, four miles west by south of the site assigned to Ar or Ir. They stand on a slight but insulated eminence, and form a conspicuous object to all the country round."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 41. *The high places of Baal*; or, Bamoth-Baal. See on xxi. 19.

The utmost part of the people; or, "the end of the people," i.e., the outermost portion of the camp of Israel. Balak seems to have thought that Balaam must have the Israelites in view to curse them effectually.

PILGRIMS NEARING HOME.

(Verse 1.)

The Israelites have now ended their wanderings. They have encamped for the last time. When they strike their tents again it will be to march forward towards the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Viewing them in their present position, we regard them as an illustration of the Christian approaching the end of his pilgrimage. There is an analogy in the following particulars. The Christian as he draws near to the end of his pilgrimage,—

I. Is cheered by delightful prospects.

From their present encampment the Israelites could behold the land promised to their fathers. They looked forward to—

1. *Rest from their toils and wanderings.* The Christian nearing home anticipates rest from sin and sorrow, from toil and trial, from doubt and fear. Soon they shall “rest from their labours,” &c. (a)

2. *Possession of the inheritance.* The “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” will soon be entered upon by the Christian who has the end of his journey in view.

3. *The realisation of precious and long-cherished hopes.* For generations past the noblest of the Israelites had been animated by the hope of the possession of Canaan; and now that hope is on the point of fruition. The Christian hopes for freedom from sin, for holiness, for likeness to Christ, for the vision of God (1 John iii. 2, 3); and as he nears the bourne of his pilgrimage the realisation of these splendid hopes comes into clear and clearer view. Most brilliant and blessed are his prospects. (b)

II. Needs preparation for the new state into which he is about to enter.

In this encampment in the plains of Moab much preparatory work had to be done amongst the Israelites before they could advance to the possession of Canaan. This preparatory work is narrated in the last eleven chapters of

this book, and in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses completed his work as legislator for them, gave them directions as to the conquest and division of the land, took great pains to guard them against apostasy, to confirm them in their covenant relation to God, and to strengthen their loyalty to Him. And as the Christian approaches the end of his pilgrimage, the progress of his preparation for heaven is often manifest to the spiritual observer. His increasing meetness for his inheritance may be seen in the beautiful ripening of his character, which grows rich and mellow. His life becomes luminous with fore-gleamings of the great glory to which he approaches. Gradually he is “made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (c)

III. Is still subjected to trials and difficulties.

While encamped in the plains of Moab, and before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites experienced—

1. *Perilous temptations.* In the twenty-fifth chapter we have an account of temptations arising from their association with idolatrous peoples and practices, to which great numbers of the Israelites yielded. The true child of God is sometimes sorely tempted and tried, even when he has the heavenly Canaan within his view.

2. *Painful separations.* Their great emancipator and leader, “Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab. . . . And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days.” And the aged pilgrim nearing the end of his course often experiences painful separations. The dear partner of his life is perhaps summoned home before him, leaving him to finish his journey alone in weariness and sorrow. The end of the pilgrimage always involves separations, and very often trying ones.

3. *Formidable difficulties.* Jordan had to be crossed before the Israelites

entered into Canaan. And death is an experience which must be passed through by the Christian pilgrim before he gains the heavenly rest ; and to some this is a source of great anxiety and trial. (d)

Ye aged pilgrims, and ye who by

reason of sickness or weakness are nearing home, be of good cheer, for your heavenly inheritance is at hand. Be ye also diligent that when the summons to arise and depart is given to you, ye may be ready joyfully to obey it.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) O weary sons and daughters of Adam ! you will not have to drive the ploughshare into the unthankful soil in heaven ; you will not need to rise to daily toil before the sun hath risen, and labour still when the sun hath long ago gone to his rest ; but ye shall be still, ye shall be quiet, ye shall rest yourselves. Toil, trouble, travail, and labour are words that cannot be spelt in heaven ; they have no such things there ; for they always rest.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) I do not know a more beautiful sight to be seen on earth than a man who has served the Lord for many years, and who, having grown grey in service, feels that in the order of nature he must soon be called home. He is rejoicing in the first-fruits of the Spirit which he has obtained, but he is panting after the full harvest of the Spirit which is guaranteed to him. I think I see him sitting on a jutting crag by the edge of Jordan, listening to the harpers on the other side, and waiting till the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern, and the spirit shall depart to God that made it. A wife waiting for her husband's footsteps ; a child waiting in the darkness of the night till its mother comes to give it the evening kiss, are portraits of our waiting. It is a pleasant and precious thing so to wait and so to hope.—*Ibid.*

During the last days of that eminent man of God, Dr. Payson, he once said, "When I formerly read Bunyan's description of the land of Beulah, where the sun shines and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there was such a place ; but now my own experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions." The best possible commentary on the glowing descriptions in Bunyan is to be found in that very remarkable letter dictated by Dr. Payson to his sister a few weeks before his death. "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The Celestial city is full in my view. Its glories have been upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of Death, which now appears but an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He

approached, and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this blessed brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."—*George B. Cheever, D.D.*

(c) Am I nearer heaven ? then I will be doing more of the work which I shall do in heaven. I shall soon use the harp : let me be carefully tuning it : let me rehearse the hymns which I shall sing before the throne ; for if the words in heaven shall be sweeter and more rich than any that poets can put together here, yet the essential song of heaven shall be the same as that which we present to Jehovah here below :

"They praise the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below."

The essence of their praise is gratitude that He should bleed : it is the essence of our praise too. They bless Immanuel's name for undeserved favours bestowed upon unworthy ones, and we do the same. My aged brethren, I congratulate you, for you are almost home : be yet more full of praise than ever. Quickened your footsteps as the glory land shines more brightly. You are close to the gate of pearl ; sing on, dear brother, though infirmities increase, and let the song grow sweeter and louder until it melts into the infinite harmonies.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) In itself, death is the self-same thing to the righteous as to the wicked. It is the same painful, convulsive separation between soul and body, sometimes attended with greater suffering, sometimes with less, but always constituting the supreme last strife of agony endurable in this mortal tenement. . . .

Some wicked men have suffered much less in dying than some righteous men. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." It would be interesting to draw a comparison between the deaths and the death-beds of a number of the most remarkable wicked men, with an equal number of the most remarkable righteous men. The circumstances of disease, of mere material evil, are much the same, except that as material evils, they are always aggravated by spiritual distress ; the pangs of conscience giving sharpness to the pangs of dissolving nature. Compare even the death-

beds of Hume, Voltaire, and Paine, with those of Edwards, Brainard, Henry Martyn and Payson, and you will find that there is not much to choose as to the physical pain of dying. Take the deaths of Herod and of Paul, the one eaten of worms, consumed inwardly, and the last in all probability crucified, and there was about as much physical suffering in the one death as in the other. Take the deaths of Nero and of John, the one is a sui-

cide, the last dying quietly at a hundred years of age; the pangs of dissolution in both cases were probably very nearly equal. The death of the righteous is no more exempt from physical distress and suffering than that of the wicked.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

For another Illustration see the description of Christian and Hopeful passing through the river of Death in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

NEEDLESS ALARM.

(Verses 2-4.)

I. This alarm was great.

"Moab was sore afraid of the people, and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel." "As the Israelites passed by the eastern border of the land of Moab, the Moabites did not venture to make any attack upon them; on the contrary, they supplied them with bread and water for money (Deut. ii. 29). At that time they no doubt cherished the hope that Sihon, their own terrible conqueror, would be able with perfect ease either to annihilate this new foe, or to drive them back into the desert from which they had come. But when they saw this hope frustrated, and the Israelites had overthrown the two kings of the Amorites with victorious power, and had conquered their kingdoms, and pressed forward through what was formerly Moabitish territory, even to the banks of the Jordan, the close proximity of so powerful a foe filled Balak, their king, with terror and dismay, so that he began to think of the best means of destroying them." *Keil and Del.* To go out and fight against them, to attempt to oppose their progress by force, were projects which could not be entertained even for a moment by the Moabites. They shrank from before them in extreme alarm.

II. This alarm seemed to be justified.

The historian mentions three things as giving rise to the terror of the Moabites.

1. *The number of the Israelites.* "Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many." The number of men, "from twenty years old and up-

wards, able to go to war in Israel," was at this time about 601,730 (chap. xxvi. 51), not including the Levites.

2. *The needs of the Israelites.* "And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." The idea seems to be that so great a multitude would have great needs, and with their great power would seize and entirely consume all the possessions of the Moabites and the Midianites. The Israelites "seemed able to eat up the Moabites, to consume their towns, to possess their substance, and to take both their cities and substance into their own hands."

3. *The deeds of the Israelites.* "Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites." They had conquered completely the former conqueror of the Moabites; how, then, could they expect to stand before them? It is probable that they had also heard of "the supernatural might of the people of God," of the wonders which He had wrought for them, and this increased their terror by reason of them.

III. This alarm led to the formation of an alliance against Israel.

The Moabites induced their neighbours, the Midianites, to make common cause with them against the people who seemed such a dangerous foe to both of them. In this we have an illustration of many alliances which have been entered into against the cause and people of God. "Notwithstanding the differences and divisions amongst the

enemies of God and His truth, they can join hand in hand together to oppress the Church." We have illustrations of this in Judg. vi. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 1; Psal. lxxxiii. 5-8; Matt. xxii. 15, 16; Luke xxiii. 12; Acts iv. 27; vi. 9; xvii. 18.

IV. This alarm was needless.

"There was no ground for such alarm, as the Israelites, in consequence of Divine instructions (Deut. ii. 9), had offered no hostilities to the Moabites, but had conscientiously spared their territory and property; and even after the defeat of the Amorites, had not turned their arms against them, but had advanced to the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan." We may regard this as an illustration of—

1. *The groundless fears of the good.* Thus "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." And the disciples of Christ "cried out for fear," when Jesus came to them walking on the sea. (a)

But the terror of the Moabites more appropriately illustrates—

2. *The groundless alarms of the wicked.* "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth."

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;
The thief doth fear each bush an officer."
—Shakespeare.

"The evil man feareth oftentimes where no fear is, trembling at the fall of a leaf, starting at his own thought, and shaking at his own shadow." "Conscience before sin committed, is a bridle to keep us from it, but when it is committed, a most sharp scourge and whip." (b)

Lessons.

1. *It is not always well to judge by appearances.* In this respect the Moabites erred. (c)

2. *No alliance can prevail against the cause of God.*

3. *The infallible antidote against alarm is firm faith in God* (comp. Psal. lvi. 3, 11; cxii. 7).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I remember, when a boy, reading a story of a traveller, who arrived in the dusk of the evening at a place where two roads met, and was greatly alarmed by what appeared to him, at a distance, to be a frightful ghost, dressed in white, with arms extended, ready to seize him in his frightful embrace. Cautionally advancing, however, he soon discovered that what appeared to be a terrible monster, ready to clutch him, was only a *guide-board* to direct him on his journey. Such are the afflictions that often befall us in this life. Seen at a distance, in the feeble light of our dim faith, they are frightful apparitions that alarm and terrify us; but, in the event, they prove so many friendly guide-boards, that a wise and gracious Providence has placed by the wayside, to guide us on to glory.—*Anon.*

It often happens that the coming of Christ to His disciples, for their relief, is that which frightens them most, because they do not know the extent of God's wardrobe; for I think that as a king might never wear the same garment but once, in order to show his riches and magnificence, so God comes to us in all exigencies, but never twice alike. He sometimes puts on the garments of trouble; and when we are calling upon Him as though He were yet in heaven, He is walking by our side; and that from which we are praying God to deliver us is often but God Himself. Thus it is with

us as with children who are terrified by their dreams in the night, and scream for their parents, until, fully waking, behold, they are in their parent's arms.—*H. W. Beecher.*

In regard to these temptations, Bunyan was sometimes just like a scared child that thinks it sees a ghost, or like a timid person in a wood by twilight, that sees in the stump of a tree a man crouched and lying in wait, and instead of daring to go boldly up to it to see what it is, stands shivering and almost dead with terror. Who has not realized this in his own experience, timid or brave? And just so Bunyan did not dare to go up to and examine and look in the face of the shocking blasphemies, accusations, and wrathful passages that Satan would be ever thrusting into his soul; but went cowering and shivering and bowed down as a man in chains under the weight of them. There was a time when all that Satan said to him he seemed morbidly inclined to take upon trust; and if it were a fiery passage of God's Word, so much the worse; for instead of coming up to it as a child of God to see what it was, and whether it were really against him, he fled from it at once as from the fiery flaming sword in the gate of Eden. And nothing can be more curious, more graphic, more affecting in its interest, more childlike in its simplicity, than the manner in which Bunyan describes the commencement and

progress of his recovery out of this state of condemnation and terror: how timidly and cautiously, and as it were by stealth, he began to look these dreadful passages in the face when they had ceased pursuing him, standing at first afar off, and gazing at them, and then, as a child that cannot get rid of its fear, slowly drawing near, and at length daring to touch them, and to walk around them, and to see their true position and meaning, but always conscious of their awful power.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

(b) However vauntingly men may bear themselves in the hour of prosperous villainy, proofs enough have existed of the fears of guilt, when the hour of calamity approaches. Why did our first parents hide themselves after their sin, when they heard the voice of the Lord in the garden? Why did Cain alarm himself at being pursued by the people of the earth? Why shrunk Belshazzar from the handwriting on the wall? Adam had before heard the voice of the Lord, and trembled not: Cain knew that no witness of the murder of his brother existed: Belshazzar understood not the meaning of the writing upon the wall:—and yet they all, after the commission of their several deeds of sin, trembled at the voices that were heard, and the signs that were about. Whence, then, was this? It was because conscience told them, that there is an Eye to which all hearts are open, and whis-

pered the important truth, which has since been proclaimed aloud to all the world, that doubtless there "is a God that judgeth in the earth."—*Matthew.*

What a state is guilt,
When everything alarms it! Like a sentinel
Who sleeps upon his watch, it wakes in dread
E'en at a breath of wind.
When apprehension can form naught but fears,
And we distrust security itself.—*W. Havard.*

(c) I remember well, one night, having been preaching the Word in a country village, I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath. I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed, when of a surety I saw something standing in the hedge, ghastly, giantlike, and with outstretched arms. Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural; here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit. I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage, and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge. I jumped the ditch, and found myself grasping an old tree, which some waggish body had taken pains to colour with a little whitewash, with a view to frighten simpletons. That old tree has served me a good turn full often.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

BALAK'S FIRST APPLICATION TO BALAAM: MAN AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

(Verses 5-14.)

Here we have the beginning of the action arising from the alliance between Moab and Midian against Israel. "Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike," the Moabites felt that it would be in vain to contend with them while they so manifestly enjoyed the blessing and protection of a mighty God. But they did think that it might be possible to withdraw or neutralize the force of that advantage, by laying upon them the heavy ban of some powerful magician; and by having them thus rendered weak as other men, they might be assailed with every prospect of success. It must have been a great recommendation of the design to them, that the result would enable them to recover the territory that had once been theirs, but which the Israelites now held by right of conquest from the Amorites. Indeed, could the Israelites be extermi-

nated, or driven back into the desert, the children of Lot might well calculate on not only recovering what they had lost, but on adding the rich lands of Argob and Bashan, which the Israelites had won from Og, to their former territories; and they would thus, with some allied tribes of Abrahamic origin, become the sole possessors of the whole country east of the Jordan."—*Kitto.* With these views they sent to Balaam, a celebrated soothsayer, requesting him to come and curse Israel. In this portion of the history we have the following instructive themes for meditation—

I. Men in difficulty seeking supernatural help.

"Balak sent messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor," &c. (vers. 5-7). This action manifests the belief that Balaam wielded supernatural powers. "It was supposed that prophets and sorcerers

had a power to curse persons and places so as to confound all their designs, frustrate their counsels, enervate their strength, and fill them with fear, terror, and dismay." (a)

1. *There is a measure of truth in this.* It is true that men have had power granted them to curse others. We have examples of this in Gen. ix. 25; Josh. vi. 26; 2 Kings ii. 24. It is probable that Balaam had this power. It is also true that when natural resources are unavailing, under certain circumstances and conditions man may obtain supernatural aid. The godly man may obtain such aid by means of prayer to God.

2. *There is much error in the views under consideration.* It was utterly erroneous to suppose that Balaam, or any one else, possessed this power independently, and could wield it arbitrarily. "The curse causeless shall not come." No man can curse those whom God hath blessed. And the power to curse or bless does not depend upon sacrifices or incantations; it is rather a gift bestowed by God, and which can be exercised only by His permission.

II. Man conscious of supernatural powers and of his subjection to Divine authority in the use of them.

And he said unto them, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." Balaam was certainly not altogether an impostor. "In his career," says Dean Stanley, "is seen that recognition of Divine inspiration outside the chosen people, which the narrowness of modern times has been so eager to deny, but which the scriptures are always ready to acknowledge, and, by acknowledging, admit within the pale of the teachers of the Universal Church the higher spirits of every age and of every nation." But notice—

1. *His consciousness of great powers.* This is clearly implied in the history. "He was endowed with a greater than ordinary knowledge of the one true God: he was possessed of high gifts of intellect and genius: he had the intuition of truth, and could see into the

life of things—in short, he was a poet and a prophet." (b)

2. *His consciousness of subjection to God in the use of his powers.* Repeatedly in the history he confesses that all his great powers were not his own, but derived from God, and could be used only by His permission. This is clearly implied in the portion of the history now under consideration (vers. 8, 13). He seems also to have been aware of the relation of Israel to the true God; and to have doubted whether he would be allowed to curse them. Hence we see—

3. *His sin against God.* Knowing what he did, he ought at once, and decidedly, to have refused the request of Balak. But he said to his messengers, "Lodge here this night," &c. He coveted "the rewards of divination"; he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." For unhallowed gain he would have prostituted his great gifts to wicked uses; and hoped to gain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. (c)

III. Man receiving a supernatural visitation.

"And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?" (vers. 9-12). This was an extraordinary visit. But here are three points of general application:

1. *God's access to man's mind.* It was probably by means of a dream or vision that God came to Balaam that night, and made known to him His will. By many avenues God can enter into man's mind, and influence his consciousness. With or without the concurrence of man's will, or even against His will, God can enter his mind and speak to him.

2. *God's interest in man's life.* This is seen in His question to Balaam, "What men are these with thee?" and in His prohibition, "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. The Lord was concerned for Balaam's welfare; He was solicitous that he should not succumb to the temptations presented to him. (d) In many ways God still manifests His solicitude for man's salvation, and His deep interest in every human life.

3. *God's authority over man's life.* "God said unto Balaam, thou shalt not go with them," &c. It is God's to command; it is man's to obey. Man's well-being is in the practical recognition of God's authority over him.

IV. *Man dealing unfaithfully with a Divine communication.*

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak," &c. (ver. 13). The most important part of God's message to him, that which would effectually have ended the business, he withheld from the messengers of Balak. He spoke as if it were possible to curse them, and as if he were inclined to accede to the request of Balak. His avarice is still further manifest in this: he could not bear to lose for ever "the rewards of divination" which the messengers had brought with them. "Balaam's character is not so peculiar as it seems. Separated from the external accidents of time, of country, and position, we may go into the streets, and find a Balaam in every third man we meet. He belonged to that still numerous class who theoretically know God, and who actually do fear Him, but whose love and fear of God are not the regulating and governing principles of their minds. They are convinced, but not converted. They can prize, and strongly desire the privileges of God's elect; they long to 'die the death of the righteous,' but are unwilling to live their life. They would serve God, but they must serve mammon also; and in the strife between the two contending influences, their lives

are made bitter, and their death is perilous."—*Kittó*.

V. *Men dealing unfaithfully as messengers.*

"And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us." "Observe Satan's practice against God's word," says Ainsworth, "seeking to lessen the same, and that from hand to hand, till he bring it to naught. Balaam told the princes less than God told him, and they relate to Balak less than Balaam told them; so that when the answer came to the king of Moab, it was not the word of God but the word of man; it was simply, 'Balaam refuseth to come,' without ever intimating that God had forbidden him."

Learn.

1. *The Divine communications have never been limited to any one people, or country, or age.* Amongst heathen peoples Divine voices have been heard, Divine visions have been seen.

2. *Great goodness is not always associated with great gifts.* "The illumination of the mind is by no means necessarily associated with the conversion of the heart." "Broad is the distinction between spiritual endowments and spiritual character."

3. *Great gifts involve great responsibility and grave peril.* The responsibility of using them in accordance with the will of the Giver, and the peril of misusing them.

4. *The temptation to covetousness is of great subtlety and strength, and assails even the most gifted natures.* "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" &c. (Luke xii. 15-21).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Their procedure, in seeking to lay the armies of Israel under a curse, that their own arms might be successful against them, is a strange notion to us. But it is not so in the East. Even at the present day, the pagan Orientals in their wars have always their magicians with them to curse their enemies, and to mutter incantations for their ruin. Sometimes they secretly convey a potent charm among the opposing troops, to ensure their destruction. In our own war with the Bur-

mese, the generals of that nation had several magicians with them, who were much engaged in cursing our troops; but as they did not succeed, a number of witches were brought for the same purpose. We may indeed trace it as a very ancient opinion among all people, that the maledictions, and the blessings, the charms, the incantations, and the devotions of men who were believed to be inspired by a superior spirit, good or evil, had the most marked effects, not only upon individuals, but

upon regions and entire nations, and even upon cattle and upon the fruits of the field. Not seldom they sought by strong enchantments to evoke the tutelary divinities of their enemies' cities, desiring thus to deprive them of what was regarded as their chief defence. Hence the proper name of many great cities was preserved as a state secret, that no enemy might be able to make use of it in their invocations. The names by which cities were ordinarily known,—as, for instance, Troy, Carthage, Rome—were not the true and secret names of these places. Rome was called *Valentia*—a name known as hers by very few persons; and Valerius Soranus was severely punished for having disclosed it. The heathens had, indeed, certain solemn invocations, by means of which they devoted their enemies to certain divinities, or rather to malignant and dangerous demons. The following is the formula of one of these imprecations, as preserved by Macrobius: “Dis-Pater, or Jupiter, if it better please thee to be called by that name—or by whatever name thou mayest be invoked—I conjure thee to pour upon this army (or this town) the spirit of terror and trepidation. Deprive of their sight all those who shall aim their strokes at us, our armies, or our troops. Spread darkness over our enemies, over their cities, their fields, their forces. Look upon them as accursed. Bring them under the most rigorous conditions to which any armies have ever been obliged to submit. Thus do I devote thee; and I and those whom I represent, the nation and the army engaged in this war, stand for witnesses. If this doom be accomplished, I promise a sacrifice of three black sheep to thee, O Earth, mother of all things, and to thee, great Jupiter.”—*John Kitto, D.D.*

For additional illustrations on this point see Dr. Adam Clarke *in loco*.

(b) Was this knowledge a reality or a pretence? If we take the narrative in its plain meaning—and that is the meaning in which we think that all historical Scripture should be taken—there can be no doubt that Balaam actually had this knowledge, that he not only held the truth, or much of truth, though he held it in unrighteousness, but that God did, in subservience to His own high purposes, actually communicate with him. Any other explanation, however ingenious, is but a continuous and painful distortion of the whole narrative, which revolts the understanding more than do even the strong facts which it tries to mitigate, in deference to the tastes and tendencies of the age. Besides this, the deep attention that Balaam had given (and was doubtless known to have given) to the affairs of the Hebrews, and his acquaintance with their early history, their existing condition, and their future hopes, are shown in the noble prophecy which he was eventually constrained to utter.

How he became possessed of the knowledge he held—and held with so little advantage to his own soul—is a question that looks more

difficult than it is. May he not have owed something to such remains of the patriarchal religion as still existed in Mesopotamia when Jacob was there, and which his residence for twenty years in that quarter may have contributed to maintain? But the only supposition which accounts *fully* for the knowledge which Balaam possessed of Jehovah, whom he generally mentions by that high and peculiar name, is the one which adds to whatever knowledge he possessed from other sources, that which he owed to the Israelites themselves. The way in which this knowledge might be acquired is clear. There could not but be many reports concerning the Israelites during their forty years' wandering in the desert. With a mind awake to everything which concerned his profession, he would be naturally attracted by the reports of the deliverance effected by the Lord for this people who had come out of Egypt, and whose parentage could not be unknown to him. He had surely heard of the passage of the Red Sea, of the waters of Meribah, of the miracle of the brazen serpent; and, as in the case of Simon Magus, a new source of celebrity and of emolument seemed to open up before him, most enticing to his besetting sins. He then, we may conceive, adopted Jehovah as his God, and named himself Jehovah's prophet. Nor, it may be, was this wholly with views of worldly advantage. It is quite possible, as Hengstenberg supposes, that there was a mixture of a higher order of sentiments, a sense of the wants of his moral nature, which led him to seek Jehovah, and laid the foundation of his intercourse with Him. This is all the more probable, as we feel bound to understand that the Lord did, in the accomplishment of His own great purposes, vouchsafe unto him special manifestations of the Divine will.—*Ibid.*

(c) Take heed of cares and covetousness, which is an immoderate desire of getting and enjoying the wealth of this world. For it stealeth away the heart of man from God and godliness, and maketh him bend the whole course of his life on earthly pleasures. This is the common sickness and disease of this age wherein we live. For give me one among many that is not overcome with the pleasures of sin, and the profits of the world. It stealeth on such as have sanctified affections, and have escaped out of the filthiness of the world, through the acknowledging of the Lord, and seeketh to overcome them. It is so deceitful and dangerous a sin, that it hath greatly assaulted, and fearfully overcome them after their calling to the truth and profession of the glorious Gospel of Christ our Saviour, and after they have begun to make some conscience of their life and conversation. Nay, such as before their calling and conversation felt no such desires and cares, now begin to be pressed, cumbered, and tempted with them. For as Satan by all means seeketh whom he may devour, and how he may hinder the repentance of sinners, so when he cannot any longer hold

men in horrible sins of idolatry, blasphemy, adultery and contempt of God. then like a wily and subtle serpent, he creepeth in another way before we can espy him ; then he suffereth us to hate evil company, surfeiting, drunkenness, riot, and excess, but he driveth to another extremity, and possesseth us with distrustful cares, and immoderate thoughts of this world, to desire greedily, to seek continually, to keep wretchedly, and to depart heavily from the vain and momentary things that perish with the use. And as this is a secret and subtle sin (albeit deeply rooted, yet hardly espied) so is it seldom cured and recovered, because men do not much consider of it and regard it, but please and flatter themselves in it. If we would attain to our former estate, and see the danger of this disease, consider the vanity and uncertainty of all worldly things ; compare them with spiritual blessings, and they are as dung and dirt matched with gold and silver. "Love not the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17 ; 1 Tim. vi. 17-19).—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) Balaam was blessed with God's special favour. You will ask at once, How could so bad a man be in God's favour ? But I wish you to put aside reasonings, and contemplate facts. I say he was specially favoured by God. God has a store of favours in His treasure-house, and of various kinds—some for a time, some for ever ; some implying His approbation, others not. He showers favours even on the bad. He makes His sun to rise on

the unjust as well as on the just. He willeth not the death of a sinner. He is said to have loved the young ruler, whose heart, notwithstanding, was upon the world. His loving mercy extends over all His works. How He separates, in His own Divine thought, kindness from approbation, time from eternity ; what He does from what He foresees, we know not, and need not inquire. At present He is loving to all men, as if He did not foresee that some are to be saints, others reprobates to all eternity. He dispenses His favours variously—gifts, graces, rewards, faculties, circumstances, being indefinitely diversified, nor admitting of discrimination or numbering on our part. Balaam, I say, was in His favour ; not indeed for his holiness' sake, not for ever ; but in a certain sense, according to His inscrutable purpose who chooses whom He will choose, and exalts whom He will exalt, without destroying man's secret responsibilities, or His own governance, and the triumph of truth and holiness, and His own strict impartiality in the end. Balaam was favoured in an especial way above the mere heathen. Not only had he the grant of inspiration, and the knowledge of God's will, an insight into the truths of morality, clear and enlarged, such as we Christians even cannot surpass, but he was even admitted to conscious intercourse with God, such as even Christians have not.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN'S COMPANIONSHIPS.

(Verse 9.)

Human companionships are—

1. *Observed by God.* The guests we entertain, the persons who visit us, the associations we enter into, the friendships we form, are all known unto the Lord.

2. *Challenged by God.* "What men are these with thee ?" This enquiry was made neither because the Lord needed information, nor yet simply to open the conversation on the mission of the messengers of Balak. It was designed, as Hengstenberg suggests, to awaken "the slumbering conscience of Balaam, to lead him to reflect upon the proposal which the men had made, and to break the force of his sinful inclination." God addresses the same question to the young who are forming dangerous associations ; to Christians who take pleasure in non-religious and worldly society, &c. He urges this

solemn enquiry (1) by the voice of conscience ; (2) by the preaching of His truth ; (3) by the exhortations and admonitions of His Word ; and (4) by the remonstrances of His Spirit.

This enquiry also indicates the Divine concern as to human companionships. We may regard this concern as—

I. An indication of the Divine solicitude for the well-being of man.

Nothing whatever that is of importance to us is uninteresting to God. In every man, created in His image and redeemed by the precious blood of His Son, He has the deepest and tenderest concern.

II. An indication of the importance of our companionships.

Inasmuch as He is so concerned as to the character of our associates, it must be a matter of vital importance to us,

and should receive our serious attention.

1. *Our associates indicate our character.* "A man is known by the company which he keeps."

2. *Our associates influence our character.* "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

(a) "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" &c. (Prov. i. 10-15). "Enter not into the path of the wicked," &c. (Prov. iv. 14-19). "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," &c. (b)

III. An indication of our responsibility to God for our companionships.

For the associations we form and the alliances we contract we must every one give account to God. Soon or late we

each must answer the interrogation, "What men are these with thee?"

IV. An indication of the danger of dallying with temptation.

Balaam should have sent the messengers back to Balak at once, with a firm refusal to comply with his request. His longing for "the rewards of divination" led him to keep them for the night; and by so doing he increased the perilousness of his position tenfold. "To parley with temptation is to play with fire." In matters of right and wrong let us never hesitate; for hesitation in such matters is both sinful and dangerous. (c) To the invitations of the tempter let us respond with a prompt and decisive *No*. To the summons of Duty let us render speedy and hearty obedience.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The examples of our companions will exert a plastic influence in the formation of our own character, slow and silent, perhaps, but irresistible and successful: and this influence will be in proportion to the love and esteem we cherish for them. All nations and all ages have confessed the truth of this sentiment. The example of a beloved companion is omnipotent, more especially if he be a sinful one, because a bad model finds in the depravity of our nature something that prepares it to receive the impression. One evil companion will undo in a month all that parents and teachers have been labouring for years to accomplish.—*J. A. James.*

There is a certain magic or charm in company, for it will assimilate, and make you like to them by much conversation with them; if they be good company, it is a great means to make you good, or confirm you in goodness; but if they be bad, it is twenty to one but they will infect and corrupt you. Therefore be wary and shy in choosing, and entertaining, or frequenting any company or companions; be not too hasty in committing yourself to them; stand off awhile till you have inquired of some (that you know by experience to be faithful), what they are; observe what company they keep; be not too easy to gain acquaintance, but stand off and keep a distance yet awhile, till you have observed and earned touching them. Men or women that are greedy of acquaintance, or hasty in it, are oftentimes snared in ill company before they are aware, and entangled so that they cannot easily get loose from it after when they would.—*Sir Matthew Hale.*

(b) Flee unholy company, as baneful to the

power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul as thou wouldst be for thy body. Durst thou drink in the same cup, or sit in the same chair with one that hath an infectious disease? And is not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself? Of all trades, it would not do well to have the collier and the fuller live together; what one cleanseth, the other will blacken and defile. Thou canst not be long among unholy ones, but thou wilt hazard the defiling of thy soul, which the Holy Spirit hath made pure.—*W. Gurnall.*

Those who willingly associate with the sinful are like men strolling with some trivial object through a district infected with fever, heedless of the invisible arrows of disease spreading through the air: or they may be compared to the River Thames, which is a sweet and pretty river enough near its source; but in the great metropolis it has kept company with drains and sewers, under the belief that its current was too powerful and pure to be injured by them. It was meant that the river should purify the sewer; but, instead of that, the sewer has corrupted the river.—*Union Magazine.*

(c) Suffer not Satan's fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parley or dispute about them; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenado or fire-ball cast into his clothes by the enemy, he does not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imaginations unto greater disturbance.—*John Owen, D.D.*

Young persons should, above all things, beware of beginnings, and by no means parley with temptations; their greatest security is in flight, and in the study to avoid all occasions

of evil; for the cockatrice, which may be easily crushed in the egg, if suffered to hatch and grow up, will prove a deadly serpent hard to be destroyed.—*Cleanings*.

HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. I.

(Verses 1-14.)

This story of Balaam I believe to be an honest narrative of facts as they actually occurred (see Micah vi. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14). These repeated references to the history of Balaam in the Old and New Testaments come in support of our belief in the reality of the history; and teach us that since Peter and Jude and John were anxious that the man's character and history should not be forgotten, and that the Church in their days should profit by the beacon-warning which the whole career of this half-bad, half-good man furnished; so, too, should we in our day gather up the details of his history and from them learn what is the lesson of the whole, how a man may struggle and fight against God; against God's kindness and God's voice, and God's warnings, and against his own thoughts and convictions, and better aspirations, until he becomes a light quenched in darkness, a heart hopelessly hardened, a man whom it is "impossible to renew unto repentance."

Look at the circumstances that brought Balaam into notice. . . .

Let us notice three things, as illustrative of human character and of the general history of Divine Providence.

I. How the career and fortunes of the children of Israel were made known in those days.

Those were the days of mere oral communication. From mouth to mouth, and from father to son, events passed along and through society. There was no machinery for the spread of intelligence: it was circulated just in the natural order of things. By these means the knowledge of Israel and of Israel's God appears to have been spread throughout all the countries surround-

ing the Sinaitic peninsula. This was in fact a revelation to these people; a mercy in making known to them, that amidst all their gods and vanities, there was yet a mightier and holier One, who would not give His name to idols, nor His "praise to graven images."

II. But this fear of the Moabites was needless, from the express instructions given to the Israelites (see Deut. ii. 9).

Of course the King of Moab, Balak, knew nothing of this; he and his elders might, however, have reflected upon the fact that the Israelites with anxious solicitude had avoided doing the least injury to the territory of the Moabites; they might have remembered that this powerful body of people had scrupulously paid for the bread and water that had been furnished them as they passed through their territory (Deut. ii. 28, 29). But the Moabites themselves were a lawless predatory tribe, in whom the will for conquest was manifested as far as their power went; and hence the needless fear of the King of Moab, expressed in that nervous language that at once reminds us of the old shepherd princes: "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." What a fine illustration is this of human nature! How "the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth:" how suspicious unprincipled men generally are! how men have estimated others by their own standard of right and wrong!

III. Let us add a word or two about Balaam.

What was he? Was he a heathen soothsayer? (and in Josh. xiii. 22 he is called so): and if he was a heathen soothsayer, how did he come to utter

such glorious and far-reaching predictions? Or was he a prophet of the true God, like Isaiah or Micah? And if so, how did he come to do such wicked things, and be so base and avaricious, and at last so gross and sensual a tempter of the people of Israel?

In reply to such questions, we remark, that previous to the constitution of the children of Israel into a separate religious nation, a nation selected for a religious purpose, with ultimate reference to the Messiah, there was a patriarchal Church extending among all the faithful that preserved uncorrupted the early traditions of the human family. This church, doubtless, received frequent oral communications from God Himself. The men composing this church were not of the seed of Abraham, but were in those far distant days a pledge and type of the enlargement of the Church of Christ among all nations. Such were Shem, Job, and Jethro.

Now, Balaam, I take it, was one of that ancient patriarchal church: traditions, partly correct and partly corrupt, had been handed down generation after generation until they came to him; on these traditions, and on occasional visits from God, his soul lived. There was a religiousness and purity about the man that attracted attention among the wild and lawless Moabites; they were impressed and awe struck with

the blameless simplicity of his life as compared with the licentious character of their sensual Baal worship; and so the man came to be regarded with reverence and fear by them, to be invested with a kind of supernatural and mysterious power by which whomsoever he blessed was blessed, and whomsoever he cursed was cursed, in the estimation of these wild Moabites.

Now you can hardly imagine a more difficult and perilous position for a man to be placed in. A man standing alone in his religious ideas; far in advance of all around him in real and essential truth; got to be regarded by others, until he comes to regard himself, as a very extraordinary character; looking *down* upon *others* quite as much as they look *up* to *him*; surrounded by wild nomadic tribes, who are filled with a vague but real, and all the more real because it was vague, dread of this superior being. What a school this, to learn lessons of the human heart—to learn how it will shuffle, and cheat, and lie, to keep up this spiritual power—to learn how, under seeming religiousness, it will aim at personal aggrandizement and influence; to learn how, step by step, he who was at one time the most religious man among them, may become the darkest and the blackest sinner among them. To us in this history the Scripture says, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”—*W. G. Barrett.*

HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. II.

(Verses 1-14.)

There is nothing so dear to man as power; the acquisition of influence over the minds of others is a conquest full of hazard and responsibility. Balaam had this influence. He had the key of Balak's heart, and could turn its wards which way he pleased. To him, living a retired life in the desert, the messengers of the king come; their request is *urgent*, for it is from the king; their request is *flattering*, for it is a testimony

from Balak that a prophet's word is better than a king's sword; their request is apparently *reasonable*, for why should the Moabites be destroyed? and their request was accompanied by “those rewards of divination” without which the heathen never consulted their favourite oracles.

But their request was a sinful one; and I believe from the language of ver. 9, Balaam saw even then that it was a

wicked request ; but it had come before him so unexpectedly—he was so honoured and flattered by it, that his moral sense, his religious convictions, got crushed and overpowered as this huge temptation came and stated itself before this weak man, and said to him, “Yield to me, yield at once, for riches and honour are in my right hand : all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Let us notice—

I. The first false step Balaam took, as indicative and prophetic of all the other downward ones.

(Ver. 8.) “And he said unto them, Lodge here this night,” &c.

This was not the way to meet this great peril. I believe he had quite enough knowledge on the subject to have shaped for himself a different course. I believe this was just a hypocritical pretence to gain time, and that the man, even now dazzled by the gifts of gold, the rewards of divination, was clutching them in his heart long before they came into his actual possession. This I think furnishes the key to the whole after-history of this greatly bad man. I do not think Balaam meant at all to consult God. The matter was too plainly before him to create any necessity for that ; but it was a capital trick to play off upon these Moabitish courtiers to impress them with a deeper sense of his importance and influence.

Do not you think we may do the very same thing? We may talk of praying over such and such a matter, and seeking Divine direction, and asking for the leadings of Providence, when really God's will is the last thing we are thinking about ; when we have already decided and determined what to do. God sees our purpose and determination to have our own way, and man hears our words about Divine direction and guidance ; and so, next to cheating God, the worst thing a man can do is to cheat himself ; so Balaam did, and you know how it succeeded.

II. The warning Balaam had during the night of agitation that followed this visit.

My reason for thinking that Balaam did not intend to consult God at all is the language of the ninth verse, which reads to me very much like a reproof. It is not Balaam going to God and asking, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” but God coming to Balaam and saying to him, “What are *you* doing? ‘What men are these with thee?’ How is it they are with thee? How is it that you did not dismiss them at once?”

Ah! that must have been a sore night of perplexity and agitation to Balaam. . . . How often must he have resolved and re-resolved, and yet, spite of all his resolutions, in the absence of a holy will did he reconsider the thing, and make up his mind, if possible, to go with the messengers of Balak.

Then in the stillness of that night, came this warning to Balaam, “What men are these with thee?” How that warning might have saved him if he had heeded it : but out of stammering lips and from an undecided heart he speaks the truth, and tells God their character and message to him.

All this was the beginning of the end of Balaam. . . . Let us look here, and see the easy steps to hell. “What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Learn how a man, in spite of his better nature and religious revivings, may quench the Spirit and die a desolate and forsaken outcast.

III. The positive refusal God gave to Balaam.

“Thou shalt not go with them.”

Here was mercy and severity ! It was *mercy* not to abandon this man ; not to give him up hopelessly and for ever to his own heart's lust, without another word of warning ; mercy to follow him after his stammering, hesitating, half-hearted confession, to say, “No, no, thou shalt not go ! There is a way that seemeth right to thee, Balaam, but the end of it is death.” And does God never follow us in that manner? Does he not come and cry unto us, “Turn ye, turn ye at My reproof ;

why will ye die?" Oh! if you have ever heard that voice, listen to it; it is thy life! "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

Here was *severity* too. Do you think a man like Balaam ought to have required such a prohibition? Ought he not at once to have felt that the whole scheme was a wicked one, which he ought to hate, and to shun and to protest against?

Ill fares it with the health of life and

soul when it must be put under the care of lock and key; when nothing but commands and prohibitions can keep it in order; when it must be surrounded by "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," to keep it right. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and the emancipated spirit has higher but happier constraints than the law of Sinai, in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.—*Ibid.*

BALAK'S SECOND APPLICATION TO BALAAM: THE DECREASE OF RESISTANCE TO EVIL.

(Verses 15-21.)

In this section of the history we have four conspicuous steps.

I. The repetition with increased force of the request of Balak to Balaam.

"And Balak sent yet again princes," &c. (verses 15-17).

1. *The embassy was more influential.* The princes who were sent this second time were more numerous and more honourable than the former ones. Here was a powerful appeal to the vanity of the prophet.

2. *The message was more urgent.* "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me."

3. *The inducements were stronger.* "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me," &c. If Balaam wanted rank and dignities, he should have them; if he wanted wealth, he should have it also. If he will but comply with the request of the King of Moab, the most splendid honours and the most munificent treasures shall be freely given to him. Learn: that *temptations which have been declined reluctantly or half-heartedly are presented again, and with greater force.* The manner of Balaam's dismissal of the former messengers prepared the way for a repetition of their mission.

II. The repetition under aggravating circumstances of guilty delay by Balaam.

"And Balaam answered and said

unto the servants of Balak," &c. (vers. 18, 19). In entertaining the proposal at all, and in keeping the messengers during the night, the prophet sinned and that heinously; he ought to have sent them back to Balak with a firm and final refusal. And his guilt was the greater because—

1. *He had been challenged by God as to the presence of the former messengers.* "God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?"

2. *He had already been prohibited from complying with the request of Balak.* "God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). To a really good man this would have been a final settlement of the question. So it ought to have been to Balaam.

3. *He himself felt and plainly declared that he was bound by the Word of the Lord in the matter.* He "said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the command of Jehovah my God, to do little or great." An utterance worthy of a holy man and a true prophet. But in the light of this declaration, Dr. Kitto forcibly enquires: "Then why not at once dismiss the messengers? He already knew the mind of God, and he ought to have known that 'God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the Son of Man, that He should repent.' Instead of that, he says, 'Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know

what the Lord will say unto me more.' What 'more'? Did Balaam fashion to himself a god after his own heart, and imagine that he also was to be moved from his declared purpose by the gifts and promises of Balak? Could he mean to insult God by his importunities? Did he hope to extort from Him, out of regard to his own worldliness, permission to bring a curse upon an entire nation which, as was well known, had been so long the object of His covenant care? Even such was what Peter calls 'the madness of the prophet.' Such also was the great wickedness of the prophet. He was afraid to transgress the command of God; but he hoped to obtain from Him permission to accompany the messengers, and so to gratify his passion for worldly gain. (a) The temptation was stronger than before; but the reasons for resisting it were also more clear and cogent; and his guilt in not doing so was darker and heavier. A temptation once dallied with, it becomes more difficult to resist it hereafter.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."
Pope.

III. The repetition of the Divine visit to Balaam.

"And God came unto Balaam at night, and said," &c. (ver. 20). Here are two things which claim attention—

1. *The permission granted.* God said unto Balaam, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." When man is determined to have his own way, a time comes when God ceases to oppose him in the matter. "My people would

not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto the stubbornness of their heart; they walk in their own counsels." In giving permission to Balaam, "God granted in anger what He denied in mercy" (comp. chap. xi. 18-20, 31-33).

2. *The condition enforced.* "But yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." God allows Balaam to go, but He restrains him so that he shall not in any way injure His cause and people. The power of the wicked for injury is limited by the Lord.

IV. The setting out of Balaam on the journey.

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." (b) Mark his unbecoming and sinful haste: God said to him, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them;" but he did not wait to be called: he "rose up in the morning," &c. "Because," says Dr. Adam Clark, "he was more hasty than he ought to have been, and went to them instead of staying till they should come to him, it was said of him, not *כי הלך ki halach*, that he went; but *כי הולך הוא ki holech hu*, i.e., he went of his own head—without being called." He "ran greedily for reward."

The chief lesson of our subject is, the importance of meeting the first temptation to evil with uncompromising resistance: to hesitate or to parley is to diminish our power of resistance, and to increase the power of the temptation, thus making successful resistance a task of almost insuperable difficulty. (c) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil," &c. (1 Pet. v. 8, 9).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You will observe he *wished* to go with Balak's messengers, only he felt he *ought not* to go; and the problem which he attempted to solve was, *how* to go and yet not offend God. He was quite resolved he would, anyhow, act religiously and conscientiously; he was too honourable a man to break any of his engagements; if he had given his word, it was sacred; if he had duties, they were imperative; he had

a character to maintain, and an inward sense of propriety to satisfy; but he would have given the world to have got rid of his duties; and the question was, *how* to do so without violence; and he did not care about walking on the very brink of transgression, so that he could keep from falling over. Accordingly, he was not content with *ascertaining* God's will, but he attempted to *change* it. He in-

quired of Him a *second time*, and this was to tempt Him. Hence, while God bade him go, His anger was kindled against him because he went.

This surely is no uncommon character; rather, it is the common case even with the more respectable and praiseworthy portion of the community. I say plainly, and without fear of contradiction, though it is a serious thing to say, that the aim of most men esteemed conscientious and religious, or who are what is called honourable, upright men, is, to all appearance, not how to please God; but how to please themselves without displeasing Him. This surely is so plain that it is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon it. Men do not take for the object towards which they act, God's will, but certain maxims, rules, or measures—right perhaps as far as they go, but defective because they admit of being subjected to certain other ultimate ends, which are not religious. Men are just, honest, upright, trustworthy; but all this, not from the love and fear of God, but from a mere feeling of obligation to be so, and in subjection to certain worldly objects. And thus they are what is popularly called moral, without being religious. Such was Balaam. He was, in a popular sense, a strictly moral, honourable, conscientious man; that he was not so in a heavenly and true sense is plain, if not from the considerations here insisted on, at least from his after history, which (we may presume) brought to light his secret defect, in whatever it consisted. His defect lay in this, that he had not a single eye towards God's will, but was ruled by other objects.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(b) That Balaam *saddled* his ass, must not lead us to suppose that there were in those days any proper saddle. This is a far later invention, even for riding on horseback, and is not even now in the East generally used in riding on asses. On this subject we have the negative evidence of sculptures. In Egypt, indeed, there are no equestrian sculptures at all except those which represent riding in chariots. Classical sculpture has no saddles or saddle cloths. We used to think that the earliest saddles were to be seen in the sculptures of the Sassanian dynasty at Shahpur in Persia; but the following passage would take

them back to the last age of the Assyrian empire: "In the earliest sculptures (at Nineveh) the horses, except such as are led behind the king's chariot, are unprovided with cloths or saddles. The rider is seated on the naked back of the animal. At a later period, however, a kind of pad appears to have been introduced; and in a sculpture at Konyunjik was represented a high saddle, not unlike that now in use in the East" (Layard).

The saddling of asses mentioned in Scripture probably consisted merely in placing upon their backs such thick cloths or mats as we see in some of the asses represented in the Egyptian paintings. Something of the same kind, or pieces of rug, felt, carpet, or cloth, are still in general use; although a kind of pad is now frequently to be seen upon asses in the large towns of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, especially among those let out for hire. Such town asses have also bridles, and sometimes stirrups, none of which, any more than the pad, do we remember to have noticed on asses upon actual journeys; and we have known of asses being used continuously on journeys quite as long as that which Balaam now undertook; and that by persons whose position in life quite enabled them to ride a horse or mule had they so chosen. It would not be at all extraordinary, even now, that a person, expecting to be laden with riches and honours, should ride upon an ass, still less in an age and country where no other mode of conveyance, except that of riding upon camels, appears to have been known.—*J. Kitto, D.D.*

(c) In worldly matters, "think twice;" but in duty, it has been well said, "first thoughts are best;" they are more fresh, more pure, have more of God in them. There is nothing like the first glance we get at duty, before there has been any special pleading of our affections or inclinations. Duty is never uncertain at first. It is only after we have got involved in the mazes and sophistries of wishing that things were otherwise than they are, that it seems indistinct. Considering a duty, is often explaining it away. Deliberation is often only dishonesty. God's guidance is plain, when we are true.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

APOSTACY.

"And Balak sent princes more and more honourable" (ver. 15).

"Tarry ye also here this night" (ver. 22).

"Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword" (chap. xxxi. 8).

We assume Balaam to have been a true prophet, though not of Israel. He appears to have been a singularly

good man. And, taking the history as it rises, we may learn what his religion was.

It was very enlightened. "His eyes were open" (see Mic. vi. 5, 8). These were Balaam's views of religion.

Balaam's religion was founded on principle,—the all-comprehensive principle of godliness. All considerations are kept in abeyance, waiting on the

will of God. "Lodge ye here this night: I will bring you word as the Lord shall speak."

His religion was practically exemplified. Balaam acted on principle, and obeyed the word of the Lord. "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). Then Balaam said to the princes of Moab, "Get you unto your land," &c. (ver. 13).

But Balaam fell, and the first of our texts brings us to the turning point of his life—*downwards*.

I. Balaam apostatized through worldliness.

The temptation was strengthened. "Balak sent princes more honourable." The overtures now comprehend all that kings can do. "I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me." Still the prophet resists; but after a hard contest principle relaxes under the influence of this sun of worldly glory. Balaam becomes a soft and pliant thing in the hands of these monarchs—a total apostate from God. By means of the world the devil ever tempts man; tempting again and again by worldly pleasures, ambition, gain. Take heed and beware of covetousness. Of all mortal sins this is perhaps the most insidious and self-deceptive.

II. Balaam apostatized progressively.

Religion is neither got nor lost all at once. The progress of Balaam's fall may be traced.

1. *His heart went after covetousness.* He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

2. *He tampered with temptation.* Why were these ambassadors kept a second night?

3. *He struggled against his own conscience.* Mountain after mountain is ascended, sacrifice after sacrifice offered, that by some means he may obtain sanction to do what God said he should not do.

4. *He departs from the word of the Lord.* "If the men call thee thou mayest go with them"—a final check and test interposed. Now he is on the downhill course. The deepest, darkest sins follow. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

III. Balaam apostatized despite the greatest obstacles.

Conscience was a perpetual obstacle. The fear of death haunted him. From the high places of Baal, where he would have cursed, he saw the Israelites encamped below. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," he utters in apostrophe; when at once his own death appals him, like a dark vision. Then he abruptly exclaims, "Let me die the death of the righteous!" There were *extraordinary as well as ordinary obstacles*. What is to do with that poor ass? Mercy, Balaam! At last the angel reveals himself, sword in hand. "I have come out to withstand thee," &c. "If," said Balaam, "it displease thee, I will get me back." *IF.* Alas! he is not turned back yet. "The Lord is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." Providence is mediatorial. The very difficulties and obstacles and adversities of life are incorporated with God's saving plans; yea, are ordered, permitted, or overruled for our good.

IV. Balaam's apostacy was not only sad but fatal.

Never did he obtain the "wages of unrighteousness." His career was one of unmitigated disappointment, issuing in the sin unto death. Very briefly is the last tragic scene given. God will be avenged of the Midianites. In the war against them Balaam is found among the enemies of the Israelites. "Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Thus the veil is drawn darkly; nor does the sacred historian ever name the fallen prophet's name more; but the silences of the Bible are significant as its utterances. Nor did that man perish alone in his iniquity. Does the backslider ever?

From this subject many additional lessons may be gathered—there is one of *hope for apostates*. The forbearance of God should lead to repentance. Balaam's case shows that there is hope for the worst and hope to the last.—*A Military Chaplain, in The Homiletic Quarterly.*

BALAAH AND HIS ASS; DIVINE CHECKS ON MAN'S DOWNWARD COURSE.

(Verses 22-35).

We are met by a preliminary inquiry ; why was God angry with Balaam because he went with the princes of Moab, when He had given consent to his going with them? (1) It is important to observe that God had not given to Balaam an unconditional permission to go with them. He might go with them on condition that the men came to call him. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." This condition had not been fulfilled when "Balaam rose up in the morning," &c. (ver. 21). "And God's anger was kindled because he went of himself." (2) Even this conditional permission was given not because God approved of his going, but because Balaam was determined to obtain permission if it were possible. (3) He went hoping to set aside the restriction which God had imposed upon him,—that he was to do that which He commanded. Clearly Balaam both desired and hoped to be able to curse Israel, and thus obtain the wealth and honours upon which his heart was set. Hence, "God's anger was kindled because he went." (a) God mercifully places obstructions in his way to save him from further sin, and to warn him against attempting to curse Israel, or exceed or deviate from His word to him. This part of the history is a striking illustration of *Divine checks on man's downward course*.

I. These checks are sometimes in operation when unperceived by man.

"The Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him And the ass saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Thrice the ass saw the Angel, and presented indications of alarm ; but Balaam saw Him not until God had opened the mouth of the ass to remonstrate with him. Balaam was blinded to such sights by the fierce lust of wealth and honours which possessed him. Many a dispensation of God's providence is intended as a check

upon man's downward course, which is not seen to be such by the person most concerned. As Balaam saw the troubled and troublesome ass, but not the forbidding Angel ; so men see the afflictions, the losses, the difficulties of their course without perceiving the merciful design of God in them ; they are irritated at the obstructions in their path, but do not see the Angel who is beyond the obstructions.

II. These checks are numerous.

"Mark," says Babington, "the manifold admonitions that Balaam had, and yet all in vain. The ass avoids the Angel once, twice, and thrice ; she hurts his foot against the wall, she lied down under him, never used to do thus before—yet all this could not smite his heart to think, Surely my journey pleaseth not God. Even thus in some sort doth God still deal with men, and yet all in vain ; their sin will not be seen—their fault will not be amended. He giveth us a twitch within, either at some sermon, or otherwise, and yet that vanisheth away, and we forget it. Then He striketh our foot against the wall, that is, He crosseth us with sickness or loss, or some calamities, assaying whether that will bring us home ; but still we beat the ass, and continue our course. When this will not serve, He throweth us down, ass and all, that is, when the lesser crosses profit not, He layeth on greater, greater, I say, and greater, till He makes us feel, even as a father smiteth more, till he humble the froward stomach of his child, yet many times in vain still."

III. These checks are of various kinds.

This is very clear in Balaam's case, in which we see—

1. *Obstructions to his progress.* The advance of his ass was thrice arrested by the Angel of the Lord. When our course is delayed, or difficulties crowd our path, or sickness removes us for a time from the active walks of life, we

shall do well to enquire whether these things are checks to restrain us from sin, or warnings that we are on a dangerous road.

2. *Appeals to his reason.* God gave to the dumb ass a voice to summon the erring and angry prophet to the exercise of reason. "The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done," &c. (vers. 28-30). "And where," asks Dr. A. Clarke, "is the wonder of all this? If the ass had opened *her own mouth*, and reproved the rash prophet, we might well be astonished; but when *God opens the mouth*, an ass can speak as well as a man." (b)

And God by various means still addresses the reason of sinful man. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," &c. "Why will ye die?" Christianity is a sublime and mighty appeal, not only to the heart, but also to the understanding of man.

3. *Rebukes for his conduct.* "The Angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?" &c. (vers. 32, 33). (c) The Lord now rebukes men for their sins by the penalties of those sins, by the condemnations of His holy Book, and by the voice of conscience. And these rebukes are designed to deter from sin.

4. *The awakening of his conscience.* "Balaam said unto the Angel of the Lord, I have sinned," &c. His whole line of conduct shows a mind ill at ease, a troubled, anxious mind. His irritation, petulance, and unreasonable anger with his ass, indicate clearly that he had no rest within. God in his great mercy was checking him by the voice of his conscience. Conscience will not allow the sinner to pursue his downward course without stirring remonstrances and stinging rebukes. (d) "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living."

IV. These checks are graduated in force.

See this in the case of Balaam: first his "ass turned aside out of the way;"

then "she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall;" then "she fell down under Balaam;" and then there appears unto the angry man "the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand," who administers to him a stern rebuke. "In this carriage of the Angel," says Mr. Ainsworth, "the Lord shows us the proceedings of His judgments against sinners: *First*, He mildly *shakes His rod* at them, but lets them go untouched. *Secondly*, He comes *nearer*, and touches them with an easy correction, as it were wringing their foot against the wall. *Thirdly*, when all this is ineffectual, He brings them into such *straits* that they can neither turn to the right hand nor to the left, but must fall before His judgments, if they do not fully turn to Him."

V. These checks are limited in their effects.

1. *By the perverseness of man's character.* The earlier obstructions only irritated and enraged Balaam. His eager lust for wealth and honour blinded him that he did not even see the forbidding Angel. To a perverse and hardened heart mild restraints are utterly ineffectual. There are, alas! some men to whom even severe checks seem ineffectual.

2. *By the irreversibleness of man's conduct.* "If it displease thee," said Balaam, "I will get me back again. And the Angel of the Lord said, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." He had advanced too far to turn back then. He must go on. Only in one respect will the Divine restraint be effectual now; and that God insists upon: "Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." Unutterably solemn is this irreversibleness of moral conduct. The career once entered upon, in many instances, must be continued. The deed once done, can never be undone; and many of its consequences will live on—for ever! (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Why did Almighty God give Balaam leave to go to Balak, and then was angry with him for going? I suppose for this reason, because his asking twice was tempting God. God is a jealous God. Sinners as we are—nay, as creatures of His hand—we may not safely intrude upon Him, and make free with Him. We may not dare to do that which we should not dare to do with an earthly superior, which we should be punished, for instance, for attempting in the case of a king or noble of this world. To rush into His presence, to address Him familiarly, to urge Him, to strive to make our duty lie in one direction when it lies in another, to handle rudely and practise upon His holy word, to trifle with truth, to treat conscience lightly, to take liberties (as it may be called) with anything that is God's; all irreverence, profaneness, unscrupulousness, wantonness, is represented in Scripture, not only as a sin, but as felt, noticed, quickly returned on God's part (if I may dare use such human words of the Almighty and All-holy God, without transgressing the rule I am myself laying down—but He vouchsafes in Scripture to represent Himself to us in that only way in which we can attain to the knowledge of Him)—I say, all irreverence towards God is represented as being jealously, and instantly, and fearfully noticed and visited, as friend or stranger among men might resent an insult shown to him. This should be carefully considered. We are apt to act towards God and the things of God as towards a mere system, a law, a name, a religion, a principle; not as against a Person, a living, watchful, present, prompt, and powerful eye and arm. That all this is a great error, is plain to all who study Scripture; as is sufficiently shown by the death of 50,070 persons for looking into the Ark—the death of the prophet by the lion, who was sent to Jeroboam from Judah, and did not immediately obey his instructions—the slaughter of the children at Bethel by the bears, for mocking Elisha—the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land for smiting the rock twice—and the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(b) The true explanation lies between the notion that the whole occurrence was purely internal, and consisted exclusively in ecstasy brought by God upon Balaam, and the grossly realistic reduction of the whole affair into the sphere of the senses and the outward material world. The Angel who met the soothsayer in the road, as he was riding upon his ass, though He was not seen by Balaam till Jehovah had opened his eyes, did really appear upon the road, in the outward world of the senses. But the form in which He appeared was not a grossly sensuous or material form, like the bodily frame of an ordinary visible being; for in that case Balaam would inevitably have seen Him, when his beast became alarmed and restive again and again, and refused to go forward, since it is not stated anywhere that

God had smitten him with blindness, like the men of Sodom (Gen. xix. 11), or the people in 2 Kings vi. 18. It rather resembled the appearance of a spirit, which cannot be seen by everyone who has healthy bodily eyes, but only by those who have their senses awakened for visions from the spirit-world. Thus, for example, the men who went to Damascus with Paul, saw no one, when the Lord appeared to him in a miraculous light from heaven, and spoke to him, although they also heard the voice (Acts ix. 7). Balaam wanted the spiritual sense to discern the Angel of the Lord, because the spirit's eye was blinded by his thirst for wealth and honour. This blindness increased to such an extent, with the inward excitement caused by the repeated insubordination of the beast, that he lost all self-control. As the ass had never been so restive before, if he had only been calm and thoughtful himself, he would have looked about to discover the cause of this remarkable change, and would then, no doubt, have discovered the presence of the Angel. But as he lost all his thoughtfulness, God was obliged to open the mouth of the dumb and irrational animal, to show a seer by profession his own blindness. "He might have reproved him by the words of the Angel; but because the rebuke would not have been sufficiently severe without some deep humiliation, He made the beast his teacher" (*Calvin*). The ass's speaking was produced by the omnipotence of God; but it is impossible to decide whether the modulation was miraculously communicated to the animal's voice, so that it actually gave utterance to the human words which fell upon Balaam's ears (*Kurtz*), or whether the cries of the animal were formed into rational discourse in Balaam's soul, by the direct operation of God, so that he alone heard and understood the speech of the animal, whereas the servants who were present heard nothing more than unintelligible cries. In either case Balaam received a deeply humiliating admonition from the mouth of the irrational beast, and that not only to put him to shame, but also to call him to his senses, and render him capable of hearing the voice of God. The seer, who prided himself upon having eyes for Divine revelations, was so blind, that he could not discern the appearance of the Angel, which even the irrational beast had been able to see. By this he was taught that even a beast is more capable of discerning things from the higher world, than a man blinded by sinful desires. It was not till after this humiliation that God opened his eyes, so that he saw the Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing in his road, and fell upon his face before this fearful sight.—*Keil and Del.*

(c) We shall find in the sequel the person styled the Angel of the Lord, as in other places, so here, assuming the character and exercising the prerogative of Deity: for He it is that afterwards says, "The word that I shall

“speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.” We are to understand, therefore, by this designation, the mighty, the uncreated Angel, by whom God made the worlds, the eternal Word, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, and which in the fulness of time was made flesh and dwelt among men.—*Dr. H. Hunter.*

The Angel of Jehovah's presence, which went before His people in the wilderness, not only to guide, but to guard and protect them; and who was an adversary to their adversaries, and at all times stood up for their help and assistance against all those that hated and opposed them.—*John Gill, D.D.*

(d) Balaam did only what men so entangled always do. The real fault is in themselves. They have committed themselves to a false position, and when obstacles stand in their way, they lay the blame on circumstances. They smite the dumb, innocent occasion of their perplexity as if it were the cause. And the passionateness—the “madness” of the act is but an indication that all is going wrong within. There was a canker at the heart of Balaam's life, and his equanimity was gone; his temper vented itself on brute things. Who has not seen the like—a grown man, unreasoning as a child, furious beyond the occasion? If you knew the whole, you would see that was not the thing which had moved him so terribly; you would see that all was wrong inwardly.

It is a strange, sad picture this. The first man in the land, gifted beyond most others, conscious of great mental power, going on to splendid prospects, yet with hopelessness and misery working at his heart. Who would have envied Balaam if he could have seen all—the hell that was working at his heart?—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

It is a man's own dishonesty, his crimes, his wickedness, and boldness, that take away from him soundness of mind; these are the furies, these the flames and firebrands of the wicked.—*M. T. Cicero.*

(e) Here is a serious reflection, that when we have begun an evil course we cannot retrace our steps. Balaam was forced to go with the men; he offered to draw back—he was not allowed—yet God's wrath followed him. This is what comes of committing ourselves to an evil line of conduct; and we see daily instances of it in our experience of life. Men get entangled, and are bound hand and foot in dangerous courses. They make imprudent marriages or connections; they place themselves in dangerous situations; they engage in unprofitable or shameful undertakings. Too often, indeed, they do not discern their evil plight; but when they do they cannot draw back. God seems to say, “Go with the men.” They are in bondage, and they must make the best of it; being the slave of the creature, without ceasing to be the responsible servant of God; under His displeasure, yet bound to act as if they could please Him. All this is very fearful.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Consider the impossibility under such circumstances of going back. Balaam offers to go back. The Angel says, “Go on.” There was yet one hope for him, to be true, to utter God's words, careless of the consequences; but he who had been false so long, how could he be true? It was too late. In the ardour of youth you have made perhaps a wrong choice, or chosen an unfit profession, or suffered yourself weakly and passively to be drifted into a false course of action, and now, in spite of yourself, you feel there is no going back. To many minds, such a lot comes as with the mysterious force of a destiny. They see themselves driven, and forget that they put themselves in the way of the stream that drives them. They excuse their own acts as if they were coerced. They struggle now and then faintly, as Balaam did—try to go back—cannot, and at last sink passively in the mighty current that floats them on to wrong.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

BALAAH AND HIS ASS; OR, A LESSON ON OBSTRUCTIVE PROVIDENCES.

(Verses 22-35.)

Is this a literal narrative? Yes; for,—

1. The style in which it is written is plain and unadorned.

2. The story is not essentially incredible.

3. It is referred to in other parts of Scripture as plain matter of fact.

4. The end to be gained was quite enough to warrant the miracle.

5. The speech of the ass is so simple

and natural that it could not be either a delusion of Balaam's excited imagination, or an invention of some later fabulist.

I. See the lessons it taught Balaam.

1. *It convinced him of spiritual blindness.* He was more stupid than his ass. She could see an angel, but Balaam could not, because he was engrossed and blinded by his covetous greed.

2. *It taught absolute submission to*

God. He made his ass, however reluctant, obey him; and he, too, however obstinate, must be taught to obey God. This was indispensable to prepare him to do God's work among the Moabites.

II. The subject is full of lessons to us.

It shows us the worth of obstructive providences, and the wisdom of giving patient attention and heed to them.

1. *We often go on wrong errands, or on right errands in a wrong spirit.* Some go on wrong errands, seeking a change of place, from selfish ambition—pursuing a business necessarily sinful—projecting a matrimonial union without regard to piety—resolution to leave home and country from recklessness and self-will. Some have wrong motives in a right way:—e.g., mercenary ministers of religion, self-seeking teachers, &c.—insincere rebukers of sin, who pander to the rich and make allowance for their vices, while they are very severe on the offending poor, &c.

2. *God checks us in His providence, and in love to our souls.* Illness; raising up of insuperable difficulties; falling off of friends; superior success to rivals, &c.

3. *We are apt to fret and be angry at the instruments of our disappointment.* We cast our spite and blame on second causes.

4. *We should seek spiritual enlightenment, to see that it is God's doing.* Be not angry and resentful, but give yourselves to prayer; else, like Balaam, you will not see that it is God who opposes you (ver. 34).

5. *We can only be permitted to go forward when we are brought to a state of perfect subjection to God.* Two things are here included: a perfect purity of motive and freedom from worldly self-seeking; and an entire acquiescence in whatever God appoints, desires, or does. Thus, acknowledge God in all your ways, and He will direct your steps.—*T. G. Horton.*

BALAAH'S ASS.

(Verses 28-30.)

Observe—

I. The historic character of the miracle here recorded.

In the history of Christ and in that of His apostles, incidents are recorded which are miraculous, side by side with those which are not miraculous. The one cannot be separated from the other; they are interwoven into one narrative, which must be accepted as a whole, or rejected altogether. So it is in the history of Balaam. It is well to note, concerning this incident, that it is spoken of by a New Testament writer as an undoubted fact (2 Pet. ii. 16).

II. The miracle itself.

The speech of the ass as the instrument of a higher intelligence, finds an analogy in another Scriptural record. In the first temptation of man, the speech of the serpent was used to convey the thought of a higher and more intelligent creature. If God permitted

Satan to use a serpent to tempt man, why should He not Himself use an ass to reprove man? If the tongue of the serpent was used to convey intelligible sounds, why should not that of any other animal be used for the same purpose? In one case the miracle was wrought by Satan for an evil end, in the other by God for a good end. We have another somewhat analogous case in the speech of parrots and other birds, who utter intelligible sentences without understanding them, the difference being that the ass did at once, and therefore miraculously, what these creatures learn to do by imitation. It is evident that these birds possess a special God-given faculty to imitate human words, and He who made them made the ass also.

III. The object of the miracle.

It was to bring Balaam to obey the Divine voice of his conscience, which

was well nigh drowned in the clamour of his covetousness for "the wages of unrighteousness."

1. It was calculated to humble him in relation to a gift of God upon which he probably prided himself. It is likely he was an eloquent man. He would now see that God could endow a brute with the gift of speech.

2. He would also see that an ass could discern a messenger from heaven, where he, blinded by his desire for gain, could see nothing but empty space.

3. He might also have learned that all speech was under Divine control, and that he would be able to utter only such words as God would permit.

Lessons.

i. That the means used by God to bring men to obedience are always

adapted to that end, although they do not always attain it. Balaam needed to repent of his present course, and nothing could have been more likely to startle him into reflection upon it than a reproof from his own beast. He had a moment's space for consideration before he stood face to face with the Angel of the Lord; but his half-hearted confession of his sin (ver. 34) shows—

ii. That, when obedience to a certain command is withheld (ver. 12), miracles are powerless to change character. Those who were unwilling to take the yoke of Christ (Matt. xi. 29), were not won by His miracles. See also Luke xvi. 31. Miracles startle the soul, but obedience transforms the character.—*From Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament.*

THE MEETING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verses 36-41.)

In this portion of the history these are the principal points:

I. The king receives the prophet with marks of great honour.

"And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him" &c. (ver. 36). And as a further token of his respect, the king sent unto Balaam and to the princes who were with him a feast from the sacrifices which he offered (ver. 40). The heathen were accustomed to pay great respect and reverence to their priests and prophets. We have evidence of this in Gen. xlvii. 22; 1 Kings xviii. 19; Ezra vii. *et al.* Their conduct in this respect is—

1. A *rebuke* to many Christians. Paul exhorted the Christians at Thessalonica to esteem their ministers "very highly in love for their work's sake:" yet how many Christians fail lamentably in this respect!

2. An *example* to many Christians. In this respect we may profitably imitate them. Our Lord saith to His faithful ministers, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (see

also Matt. x. 40, 41; John xiii. 20). (*a*)

II. The king expresses his surprise at the delay of the prophet in coming to him.

"And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee?" &c. (ver. 37). Thus he gently rebukes him for not having come to him when he was first asked to do so. And he seems surprised that his power to reward the prophet had not secured his ready compliance with his request. Clearly he was of opinion that the blessing or curse of a prophet was purchasable if the would-be purchaser could only bid high enough for them; that Balaam had his price; and that he, Balak, was able to pay it (*b*) (comp. Acts viii. 18-23). Balak seems to have had no idea of the sacredness of genius, or of the solemn responsibilities involved in the possession of great gifts, or that endowments from God must be used only in religious accordance with His holy will. A worldly-minded man, he can think of no higher motive than this, "Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" (*c*)

But of what value are the highest honours and the richest rewards which kings can bestow, when they are obtained at the cost of righteous principles and a clear conscience? (*d*)

III. The prophet endeavours to moderate the expectations of the king.

"And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee," &c. (ver. 38). Balaam felt himself under a restraint which he could not throw off; no, not even for all the wealth and honours which a king has power to bestow. (*e*)

The Lord was watching over the interests of Israel; and while He protected them neither could Balaam curse them, nor Balak conquer them. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," &c. (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). (*f*)

IV. The king endeavours by sacrificial offerings to induce Jehovah to favour his design.

"Balak offered oxen and sheep." *Keil and Del.*: "The sacrifices were not so much thank-offerings for Balaam's happy arrival, as supplicatory offerings for the success of the undertaking before them. 'This is evident,' as Hengstenberg correctly observes, 'from the place and time of their presentation; for the place was not that where Balak first met with Balaam, and they were only presented on the eve of the great event.'

Moreover, they were offered unquestionably not to the Moabitish idols, from which Balak expected no help, but to Jehovah, whom Balak wished to draw away, in connection with Balaam, from His own people (Israel), that He might secure His favour to the Moabites."

How utterly mistaken in this view of the Divine Being! He changes not. No sacrifices can alter His will, or turn Him aside from His purposes. How unworthy of God and how dishonouring to Him is such a view of His character! No bribes, however costly, can induce Him to forsake His people, or to favour an unrighteous cause. And the sacrifices offered to Him with such a view are an abomination in His sight.

V. The king and prophet ascend a height and obtain a view of the camp of Israel.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people." Balak thought that Balaam must see the Israelites in order that he might curse them effectually. And now the time had come for the prophet to make the awful attempt. Balak was in a state of eager anxiety. But who shall tell the state of Balaam's mind at this time?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) For illustrations on this point see p. 62.

(*b*) As a mere matter of fact, known to us, by distressing observation, the saving of money is a fascination of the devil to many men; it absorbs their energies; it engrosses their time; it perverts their moral nature; it destroys natural affection; it sets them on fire of hell. Kept from the sight of gold, they may even bear a strong resemblance to pious men; they may be intelligent, genial, and entertaining, yet the moment their thoughts are turned to the accumulation of property, every trace of nobleness is destroyed. The victim of the world is entirely without self-control: every speck of dust is to him as a shackle of bondage; he would risk his eternity for a stone or a clod. At all times he would not know this, for in the moments of his release from the urgency of his tormentor he might discover traits of a better disposition; it is when he is brought again into contact with worldly con-

cerns that he shows how utterly he is enslaved and unmanned. I may remind my young hearers of the tiger that was trained to be the playmate of a favourite child. Weeks and months and years elapsed, and the tiger was gentle and playful; it so happened, however, that in licking the child's hand it tasted blood, and instantly the natural appetite of the creature was excited, and the child fell a victim to its ferocity. It is so in the moral history of many a man: there are breaks in human life which are filled up by many excellencies, and which apparently give the lie to the charge of apostacy, and yet suddenly some besetting sin will set the whole nature on fire, and in the madness of an hour the fabric of a lifetime may be overthrown.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(*c*) But few men in any country touch the highest point of fame; thousands upon thousands in all generations come to honour and influence, yet in a few months after their death

their names cease to have any interest but for the smallest circles. This reflection ought not to discourage virtue. Peace of heart is better than mere renown. To be known in heaven is the best fame. To have a place in the love of God is to enjoy the true exaltation.—*Ibid.*

(d) With money you can buy the canvas and the oil, but not the artistic eye which interprets and appreciates the picture; you can buy the poem, but the living and inspiring poetry is not for sale; you can rent the garden, but cannot bribe the flowers to whisper their tender messages. After all, it is but a very little way that money can go; it can do nearly everything in the market-place or among the dust of cities, but what do the angels know of your currency, your bills of exchange, your promissory notes, and your intricate conveyancing of estates? Not one of the great redemptions of life can be wrought out with money; death takes no bribe; the grave will not sell its victories for gold; you may buy the Bible, but you cannot buy the Holy Ghost; you may pay for the masonry, but no money can put you in possession of the Spirit of the altar.—*Ibid.*

(e) The kite broke away from its string, and instead of mounting to the stars it descended into the mire. The river grew weary of its restraining banks, and longed to burst them, that it might rush on in the wild joy of freedom; down went the embankments, the river became a flood, and carried destruction and desolation wherever it rushed. Unrein the coursers of the sun, and lo! the earth is burned; unbind the girdle of the elements, and chaos reigns! Let us never desire to be rid of those restraints which God has seen fit to lay upon us; they are more needful than we dream.

Remember how the vine, when bound to the stake which upheld it, judged itself a martyr, and longed to be free; but when it saw the wild vine at its feet, rotting on the damps and pining amidst the heats, and producing no fruit, it felt how needful were its bonds if its clusters were ever to ripen.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) According to the gloomy prophets, all England is going to the bad—not England alone, but all countries are hastening on to a general and everlasting smash. Then one begins to fret about the Church of God; for according to the soothsayers of the age, Anti-Christ is yet to come, and new heresies are to spring up; the dogs of war are to be let loose, the Pope is to rule and burn us, and one hardly knows what else. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation, have been made sometimes to minister poison to every bright hope, but here is our comfort with regard to the future:—

“He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might:
His very act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”

Let the worst come to the worst, the best will come of it ere long. “If the heavens were a bow,” saith one, “and the earth were the string, and God should fit the arrows of His vengeance thereon, and shoot at the sons of men, yet they could find shelter with the archer himself.” Our refuge is in God; let the worst calamities occur to the world in years to come we are secure. It must be well: it cannot be ill. “Jehovah, Jireh.” Lift high the banner and hopefully advance to the battle, for the victory shall surely come unto the Arm eternal, the Will immutable.—*Ibid.*

HISTORY OF BALAAM.—No. III.*

(Verse 36—chap. xxiv. 25.)

We approach the termination of this eventful history. The portion of Scripture that forms the basis of our remarks is chap. xxii. 36, to the end of chap. xxiv.

We left Balaam on his journey to Balak; we now commence with his arrival in the land of Moab. With what strangely mingled feelings must Balaam have pursued this journey! That dumb ass had not spoken for nothing: a good many twinges of conscience, no doubt, Balaam had on the way; perhaps, after all, God did not like his going with these messengers; perhaps he had better have been content with his humble mountain home;

perhaps he will get into trouble, for he cannot forget—“The word that I shall speak, that shalt thou speak.” However, Balaam goes on, just this once, and when this affair is over he will return home, eschew Balak and his messengers for ever; in fact, Balak had made him so many presents already, that he will be able in future to afford to keep a conscience, and to say “No” to temptation.

As the key to this history, recall what was said before of Balaam’s connection with the old patriarchal church: he was a monotheist amongst a multi-

* For Nos. I. and II, see pp. 429-431.

tude of polytheists; to that idea of God he was faithful. Moreover, Balaam knows God to be the God of Israel, that God has chosen Israel, and that God is with them. The history of their eight and thirty years' weary pilgrimage in the peninsula of Sinai, was matter of notoriety among all the wild Ishmaelites of that part; and Balaam is seer, he can prognosticate out of existing facts; and in the opposition of the Amalekites, and Moabites, and Edomites to the Israelites, he sees the certainty of their final overthrow. And yet the King of Moab sends to him to curse the people of God's choice; a people that Balaam knows are to be victorious; and he goes, although he knows it to be impossible to curse them; but he hopes to get his "wages of iniquity."

And so Balaam and Balak meet. The first words of the interview are ominous. Balak chides Balaam, and Balaam admits that all he says is right; but adds, "the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

When a man has come to that pass it is all over with him. How many do we meet every day, who would be wicked if they dared; who would go

here, and would go there, only they are not at liberty; who don't mind the sin at all, only its exposure:—they might be reprov'd; they might lose a situation, &c. There is nothing left, but another edition of Solomon's picture in the Proverbs, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof," &c.

Endeavour to realize the scene. Balaam was alone; he "went to a high place;" there he stood by his burnt offering; below, on the plains, were God's people Israel: from the top of the rocks he saw their encampment, the "pillar of cloud" still hovering over the assembled host: all was order, security, and strength amongst Israel. Far away is the uncrowned king and his nobles, waiting the return of Balaam: but meanwhile a very notable event occurs,—*"And God met Balaam."* Balaam shall yet be warned, shall yet have another word; and so God met him.

The lessons from the whole are—

The formidable power of sin. Man can degrade himself below the level of a beast. The dumb ass was wiser than Balaam.—*W. G. Barrett.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Build me here seven altars.* "As seven was a number of perfection, Balaam chose it on this occasion, because he intended to offer a grand sacrifice, and to offer a bullock and a ram upon each of the altars; the whole to be made a burnt offering at the same time. And as he intended to offer seven bullocks and seven rams at the same time, it could not be conveniently done on one altar, therefore he ordered seven to be built."—*A. Clarke LL.D.*

The offerings were presented to Jehovah, whom Balaam acknowledged as his God.

Verse 2. *Balak and Balaam offered.* "Balak presented the sacrifices to be

offered for him and for his people; and Balaam performed the office of a priest and offered them."—*Bp. Patrick.*

Verse 3. *I will go; peradventure Jehovah will come to meet me.* "The meaning of these words is apparent from chap. xxiv. 1: and 'he went no more to meet with the auguries.' Balaam went out to look for a manifestation of Jehovah in the significant phenomena of nature."—*Keil and Del.*

He went to an high place. *Keil and Del.:* "a bald height." *Speaker's Comm.:* "'a bare place on the hill,' or 'a scar'; as opposed to the high place with its grove of trees." Heathen augurs were wont to select the lonely and

barren summits of mountains for their auspices.

Verse 4. *God met Balaam.* "God served His own purposes through the arts of Balaam, and manifested His will through the agencies employed to seek it, dealing thus with Balaam in an exceptional manner. For to God's own people auguries were forbidden (Lev. xix. 26)."—*Speaker's Comm.*

I have prepared seven altars, &c. "The spirit of these words is thoroughly that of a heathen worshipper expecting in all his devotions his *quid pro quo*."—*Ibid.*

Verse 7. *Parable.* Heb.: *masal*, a proverb, similitude, sententious poem.

Aram. This word signifies "highland," and denotes the country to the north-east of Palestine as far as the banks of the Euphrates. The country between the Euphrates and the Tigris was specially designated "Aram-naharaim," or "Aram of the two rivers."

Mountains of the east, i.e., of Mesopotamia (comp. Deut. xxiii. 4).

Defy Israel. Rather "threaten," or "menace Israel."

Verse 8. *How shall I defy, &c.* Rather: "how shall I threaten whom Jehovah hath not threatened?"

Verse 9. *Dwell alone, &c., i.e.,* separate from other nations. The outward separation was a symbol of their inward separation from the heathen world; and this inward separation was an indispensable condition of their outward separation and safety.

Verse 10. *The fourth part, &c.* (comp. chap. ii.).

Verse 13. *Come with me unto another place, &c.* Balak's idea seems to be, that Balaam's view of the camp of Israel was so extensive, and so impressed him with their number and order and power, that he could not curse them; and that if he took him to a place from whence he could see only a small portion of them, he would then be able to curse them.

Keil and Del., however, take a different view of this. They say the translation should be, "'whence thou wilt see it (Israel); thou seest only the

end of it, but not the whole of it' (sc. here upon Bamoth-Baal). This is required," they say, "by a comparison of the verse before us with chap. xxii. 41, where it is most unquestionably stated, that upon the top of Bamoth-Baal Balaam only saw 'the end of the people.' For this reason Balak regarded that place as unfavourable, and wished to lead the seer to a place from which he could see the people, without any limitation whatever."

Verse 14. *The field of Zophim.* "Or 'of watchers.' It lay upon the top of Pisgah, north of the former station, and nearer to the Israelitish camp; the greater part of which was, however, probably concealed from it by an intervening spur of the hill. Beyond the camp Balaam's eye would pass on to the bed of the Jordan. It was perhaps a lion coming up in his strength from the swelling of that stream (cf. Jer. xlix. 19) that furnished him with the augury he awaited, and so dictated the final similitude of his next parable.—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 18. *Rise up, Balak, &c.* A summons to minute and earnest attention.

Verse 20. Omit the "commandment" of the A. V.

Verse 21. *He hath not beheld iniquity, &c.* There is a large diversity in the interpretation of this verse. That of Keil and Del. seems to us correct: "God sees not יָדָע , worthless-

ness, wickedness, and עָמָל , tribulation, misery, as the consequence of sin, and therefore discovers no reason for cursing the nation. That this applied to the people solely by virtue of their calling as the holy nation of Jehovah, and consequently that there is no denial of the sin of individuals, is evident from the second hemistich, which expresses the thought of the first in a positive form: so that the words, 'Jehovah his God is with him,' correspond to the words, 'He beholds not wickedness;' and 'the shout of a king in the midst of it,' to 'His not seeing suffering. Israel therefore rejoiced in the blessing of God

only so long as it remained faithful to the idea of its Divine calling, and continued in covenant fellowship with the Lord. So long the power of the world could do it no harm. The 'shout of a king, in Israel is the rejoicing of Israel at the fact that Jehovah dwells and rules as King in the midst of it (cf. Exod. xv. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 5). Jehovah had manifested Himself as King, by leading them out of Egypt."

Verse 22. *God.* אֱלֹהִים, the Mighty One.

Unicorn. Rather, the buffalo, or wild bull.

Verse 23. *Surely there is no enchantment, &c. Keil and Del.* translate: "For there is no augury in Jacob, and no divination in Israel. At the time it is spoken to Jacob, and to Israel what God doeth." "נִחֲשׁ and קִסָּם, οἰωνισμός and μαντεία, *augurium et divinatio*, were the two means employed by the heathen for looking into futurity. The former was the unfolding of the future, from signs in the phenomena of nature and inexplicable occurrences in animal and human life; the latter pro-

phesying from a pretended or supposed revelation of the Deity within the human mind. נִחֲשׁ, 'according to the time,' i.e., at the right time, God revealed His acts, His counsel, and His will to Israel in His word, which He had spoken at first to the patriarchs, and afterwards through Moses and the prophets. In this He revealed to His people in truth, and in a way that could not deceive, what the heathen attempted in vain to discover through augury and divination (cf. Deut. xviii. 14-19)."

Verse 25. *Neither curse them, &c. Keil and Del.*: "'Thou shalt neither curse it, nor even bless.' In his vexation at the second failure, he did not want to hear anything more from Balaam."

Verse 28. *Peor.* "Mount *Peor* was one peak of the northern part of the mountains of Abarim by the town of *Beth-peor*, which afterwards belonged to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20), and opposite to which the Israelites were encamped in the steppes of Moab (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46)."—*Keil and Del.*

Jeshimon. See on chap. xxi. 20.

THE SACRIFICE OF BALAK AND BALAAM,

(Verses 1-4.)

Observe—

I. Objectively this sacrifice was as perfect as the offerers could make it.

Clearly they aimed at presenting a perfect offering. This is exhibited—

1. In the *number* of offerings. There were *seven* altars, upon each of which they offered a bullock and a ram. Seven was regarded as a sacred and perfect number.

2. In the *victims* offered. "Seven oxen and seven rams." The victims were not mean or of little worth; but of the most valuable that were used for sacrifices.

3. In the *kind* of offerings. They were burnt offerings, which were presented without any reserve, being en-

tirely consumed in honour of the Divine Being.

It was a law amongst the Hebrews that they should present to God offerings of their choicest and best. Spiritually that law is still binding. (a)

II. Subjectively this sacrifice was very imperfect, and even sinful.

In the sentiments and motives of the offerers there was much that was both erroneous and evil.

1. The sacrifice was offered *with an admixture of faith and superstition*. Balak and Balaam believed the truth that acceptable approach to God must be by sacrifice. But there was superstition in their view of His regard for sacrifices, or the way in which He was

influenced by them. It was also belief in heathen superstitions, which led Balaam to go to look for auguries (ver. 3). Superstitions commend neither the offerer nor his offerings to God.

2. The sacrifice was offered *under the impression that the offering was meritorious on the part of the offerers, and placed God under an obligation to them.*

"And God met Balaam, and he said unto Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram." The state of mind which led Balaam thus to call Divine attention to the sacrifices, implied the ignoring of two facts of vital importance:—(1) God's proprietorship of all things. We can only present unto Him His own. David felt this, and said, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (comp. *Psa. l. 8-13*). (2) Man's relation to God as a dependent and sinful creature. Where this is realised, all notions of merit in man in relation to God, or of obligation upon God in relation to man, are effectually excluded. The best man at his best, is but an unprofitable servant, as regards God (*Luke xvii. 10*). Balaam did not feel thus: he was not humble, but thought he had rendered to God very meritorious service. (b)

3. The sacrifice was offered *as a means to induce God to change His mind.* He had forbidden Balaam to curse Israel (*chap. xxii. 12*); Balaam desired Him to revoke that prohibition, and to permit him to curse them; and for this

purpose he offered his sacrifice. At first God absolutely forbade his accompanying the messengers of Balak; then afterwards He gave him conditional permission to go with them; and Balaam probably regarded this as the result of a change of mind in the Divine Being, and drew from it encouragement to hope that he might obtain from Him permission to curse Israel. How false and dishonouring was such a view as regards God! how perilous as regards man! (c)

4. The sacrifice was offered *with a view of obtaining permission and power to curse the people of God.* This was the final cause of the sacrifice, and was utterly sinful in the sight of God.

Conclusion.

1. Learn that *the true value of sacrifice is to be looked for not in the quantity or quality of the offering, but in the spirit of the offerer.* "Thou desirest not sacrifice," &c. (*Psa. li. 16-19*). (d)

2. *Trusting in Christ Jesus for acceptance, let us present ourselves to God.* "God must be worshipped with our best. A man's best is himself; and to sacrifice this is the true sacrifice." "I beseech you therefore, brethren," &c. (*Rom. xii. 1*). (e)

3. *He who has truly given himself to God will keep back nothing from Him.* Hearty obedience and reverent worship he will render to God, and kind and helpful service to man. "By Jesus, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise," &c. (*Heb. xiii. 15, 16*).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point see p. 101.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 100.

(c) Balaam wanted to please himself without displeasing God. The problem was how to go to Balak, and yet not offend God. He would have given worlds to get rid of his duties, and he sacrificed, not to learn what his duty was, but to get his duty altered. Now see the feeling that lay at the root of all this—that God is mutable. Yet of all men one would have thought Balaam knew better, for had he not said, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath he said, and shall He not

do it?" But, when we look upon it, we see Balaam had scarcely any feeling higher than this—God is more inflexible than man. Probably had he expressed the exact shade of feeling, he would have said, more obstinate. He thought that God had set His heart upon Israel, and that it was hard, yet not impossible, to alter this partiality. Hence he tries sacrifices to bribe, and prayers to coax God.

How deeply rooted this feeling is in human nature—this belief in God's mutability—you may see from the Romish doctrine of indulgences and atonements. The Romish Church permits crime for certain considerations. For certain considerations it teaches that God will forgive crimes. Atonements after, and indul-

gences before sin, are the same. But this Romish doctrine never could have succeeded, if the belief in God's mutability and the *desire* that He should be mutable, were not in man already.

What Balaam was doing in these parables, and enchantments, and sacrifices, was simply purchasing an indulgence to sin; in other words, it was an attempt to make the Eternal Mind change. What was wanting to Balaam to feel was this—God *cannot* change. What he did feel was this—God *will* not change. There are many writers that teach that this and that is right because God has willed it. All discussion is cut short by the reply, God has determined it, therefore it is right. Now, there is exceeding danger in this mode of thought, for a thing is not right because God has willed it, but God wills it because it is right. It is in this tone the Bible always speaks. Never, except in one obscure passage, does the Bible seem to refer right and wrong to the sovereignty of God, and declare it a matter of will: never does it imply that if He so choose, He could reverse evil and good. It says, "Is not My word equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" was Abraham's exclamation in a kind of hideous doubt whether the Creator might not be on the eve of doing injustice. So the Bible *justifies* the ways of God to man. But it could not do so unless it admitted Eternal Laws, with which no will can interfere. Nay more, see what ensues from this mode of thought. If Right is right because God wills it, then if God chose, He could make injustice, and cruelty, and lying to be right. This is exactly what Balaam thought. If God could but be prevailed on to hate Israel, then for him to curse them would be right. And again: if power and sovereignty make right, then, supposing that the Ruler were a demon, devilish hatred would be as right as now it is wrong. There is great danger in some of our present modes of thinking. It is a common thought that Might makes Right, but for us there is no rest, no rock, no sure footing, as long as we feel right and wrong are mere matters of will and decree. There is no safety then, from those hankering feelings and wishes to alter God's decree. You are unsafe till you feel "Heaven and

earth may pass away. but God's word cannot pass away."—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(d) All sacrifice is worthless which is not vitalized by the *moral* element. Where the sacrifice represents a broken spirit, where it sets forth the operations of a contrite heart, it becomes acceptable to God, and useful as a basis of negotiation with heaven. Where the moral element is present, the physical element will not be forgotten. Though sacrifice in itself, without the presence of spiritual feeling, is absolutely worthless in the sight of God, yet where the moral element is present in the form of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, sacrifice will be presented even in its material forms. Thereby the penitent man expresses his love, and fosters his faith, and testifies his gratitude. Blessed be God, in our case it is unnecessary that we provide bullock or burnt offering. The one final sacrifice has been offered in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Higher than this no man can go. After His blood has been shed, the blood of all animals is unavailing. It is enough that the Lamb of God poured out His blood for the sins of the world. Yet we have to offer sacrifices, not indeed of atonement, but of gratitude; we have to testify by exalted pursuits, by noble endeavours, by generous efforts to ameliorate the condition of mankind, by all holy labour in the cause of evangelization, that our hearts have been broken and healed, that our spirits have been bowed down, and yet lifted up.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." That is a very solemn enunciation. Sacrifice is worship. You may pray devout prayers, you may sing sweet hymns with rapture, you may rejoice in all the peacefulness of the Sabbath well observed, you may be a religious man, and yet you may not have mercy; men may perish about you, and you be indifferent; works of beneficence may be going on under your eye, and you have no part or lot in them. It is possible for a man to be a religious man, and not a Christian. To be a Christian a man must have that spirit which led Christ to give Himself to be a ransom for the world, and he must carry his life so as to be a perpetual benefaction, not to himself, but to others. To be Christlike in these regards is to be a Christian.—*H. W. Beecher.*

BALAAH'S FIRST PARABLE; THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 5-12.)

Balaam went out to look for auguries, and the Lord God met him and put a word in his mouth. "God designed to serve His own glory by him, and therefore met Balaam. Balak having chosen him for his oracle, God would constrain him to utter such a confession, to the

honour of God and Israel, as should render those for ever inexcusable who should appear in arms against them." Thus the Divine message was spoken by the lips of a bad man; and he who longed to curse Israel, in exalted strains pronounces their blessedness. Balaam's

declaration of the happiness of Israel, sets forth *the Blessedness of the People of God*.

I. It is placed beyond the power of their enemies.

Balaam both felt and declared this — "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I threaten whom the Lord hath not threatened? . . . And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me?" &c. (vers. 8, 11, 12). Balaam felt that he could not curse Israel. And if he had cursed them, his curse would not have injured them, but himself. "See what it is to live within the wall of God's blessing." "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion," &c. (Psa. cxxv. 1, 2). "Upon this rock I will build My Church," &c. (Matt. xvi. 18). "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c. (Rom. viii. 31, 35-39). "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (a)

II. It consists in their separation from the ungodly.

"From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." "The separation of Israel from the rest of the nations was manifested outwardly to the seer's eye, in the fact that 'the host of Israel dwelt by itself in a separate encampment upon the plain. In this his spirit discerned the inward and essential separation of Israel from all the heathen.'" In three respects were the Israelites separated from other nations—

1. *Politically they were independent of them.* Both their country and their polity the Hebrews received from the Lord God; and so long as they kept themselves from the vices of the heathen, their independence was unimpaired.

2. *Morally they were separated from them.* God called them to complete separation from the idolatries and vices

of the corrupt Canaanites and others, and to the practice of a pure morality and the observance of an exalted and exalting worship.

3. *By the possession of peculiar privileges they were separated from them.* "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (comp. Deut. vii.). To them pertained "the adoption, and the glory," &c. (Rom. ix. 4, 5). This declaration of their separation from other nations "has been so marvelously realized in the history of the Israelites, notwithstanding their falling short of the idea of their Divine calling, 'that whereas all the mightier kingdoms of the ancient world, Egypt, Assyria, Babel, &c., have perished without a trace, Israel, after being rescued from so many dangers which threatened utter destruction under the Old Testament, still flourishes in the Church of the New Testament, and continues also to exist in that part which, though rejected now, is destined one day to be restored' (*Hengstenberg*)."

The people of God are still called to be a separate people. "They are not of the world," said Christ, "even as I am not of the world. I pray not," &c. (John xvii. 14-16). Their maxims, customs, laws, and conduct are dissimilar from those of the world: "their inheritance, their home, their citizenship are in heaven; their affections, conversation, pursuits, and pleasures are heavenly." (b)

III. It consists also in their vast numbers.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the numbers of the fourth part of Israel"? To the eye of Balaam the Israelites seemed an innumerable host (comp. Gen. xiii. 16, and Deut. x. 22). Their rapid increase was regarded as the result of the blessing of the Lord their God.

The spiritual Israel of God is "a great multitude which no man can number." We may form an approximately correct idea of the countless

hosts of the people of God from three considerations. Their number is—

1. *Unlimited as regards time.* It includes the good of all past ages of the world's history, of the present, and will include those of all future ages.

2. *Unlimited as regards place.* The good of all lands are members of the great Church of the living God. "They shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north," &c. (Luke xiii. 29). "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations," &c. (Rev. vii. 9).

3. *Unlimited as regards race or class.* The godly African as well as the godly European, &c. The rich and the poor; the learned and the unlearned; the bond and the free, &c. (c)

IV. It consists also of righteousness of character.

Balaam speaks of the Israelites as "the righteous" (ver. 10). "But Israel," says *Keil* and *Del.*, "was not only visibly blessed by God with an innumerable increase; it was also inwardly exalted into a people of יִשְׂרָאֵל, righteous or honourable men. The predicate righteous is applied to Israel on account of its Divine calling, because it had a God who was just and right, a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. xxxii. 4), or because the God of Israel was holy and sanctified His people (Lev. xx. 7, 8; Exod. xxxi. 13), and made them into a *Jeshurun* (Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26). Righteousness, probity, is the idea and destination of this people, which has never entirely lost it, though it has never fully realised it. Even in times of general apostasy from the Lord, there was always an *εὐλογία* in the nation, of which probity and righteousness could be truly predicated (cf. 1 Kings xix. 18). The righteousness of the Israelites was a product of the institutions which God had established among them, of the revelation of His holy will, which He had given them in His law, of the forgiveness of sins, which He had linked on to the offering of sacrifices, and of the communication of His Spirit, which was ever living and at work in His Church (*Hengstenberg*)."

The people of God are still called to be righteous; and they realize this calling by the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ:—"even the righteousness of God through faith of Christ Jesus unto all and upon all that believe." There cannot be any true blessedness apart from righteousness. (d)

V. It is in some respects desired even by the ungodly.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" "Death," again quoting from *Keil* and *Del.*, "is introduced here as the end and completion of life. 'Balaam desires for himself the entire, full, indestructible, and inalienable blessedness of the Israelite, of which death is both the close and completion, and also the seal and attestation' (*Kurtz*). This desire did not involve the certain hope of a blessed life beyond the grave, which the Israelites themselves did not then possess; it simply expressed the thought that the death of a pious Israelite was a desirable good. And, this it was, whether viewed in the light of the past, the present, or the future. In the hour of death the pious Israelite would look back with blessed satisfaction to a long life, rich 'in traces of the beneficent, forgiving, delivering, and saving grace of God'; he could comfort himself with the delightful hope of living on in his children, and his children's children, and in them of participating in the future fulfilment of the Divine promises of grace; and lastly, when dying in possession of the love and grace of God, he could depart hence with the joyful confidence of being gathered to his fathers in Sheol (Gen. xxv. 8)."

Thus the ungodly bear testimony to the excellence of the lot of the people of God by desiring to share their blessedness. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." There is but one way of enjoying their privileges, and that is by possessing their character. To "die the death of the righteous," we must live the life of the righteous. (e)

Is this blessedness ours? Are we truly of the number of God's spiritual

Israel? By faith in Christ every man may become a member of the "chosen generation," and the "holy nation."

"They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I read a story the other day of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages were ten or a dozen miles from each other, and the wolves were out, and the horses were rushing forward madly, and the travellers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them; and though the horses tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were fast behind, and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road, and to shut-to the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof; they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut; they could hear them gnawing at the door, and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises; but the travellers were safe, because they had entered by the door, and the door was shut. Now, when a man gets in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him; and his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction. But he has got in to Christ, and that is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not start a single beam of the eternal refuge: it must stand fast, though earth and heaven should pass away.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For additional illustrations on the Security of the People of God, see pp. 105, 154.

(b) It is our duty to flee from all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to have no fellowship with the ungodly, nor with the unfruitful works of darkness. This indeed is "pure religion and undefiled, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." This the Apostle Paul urgeth, 2 Cor. vi. 14-18. We know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. One rotten sheep infecteth a whole flock. One leper spreadeth the disease further, to the hurt of sundry other. Now there is no leaven like to the leaven of sin (1 Cor. v. 6); no infection comparable to the infection of sin; no leprosy so deadly and dangerous as the contagion of sin, which bringeth danger and destruction to soul and body. Therefore we must not join ourselves with the ungodly, seeing that we are a holy people to the Lord our God. He hath chosen us to be a precious people unto Himself above other people that are upon the earth. We "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," &c. (1 Pet. ii. 9). Seeing we are washed from the corruptions of the flesh, let us not defile ourselves again; seeing we are called out of the world, let us not return into the world; and seeing we are freed from the thralldom of sin, let us not sell ourselves again to our own lusts, which fight against the soul.

We cannot come near an infectious disease without danger of infection. We cannot touch pitch without danger to be defiled with it.—*W. Attersoil.*

For another illustration on Separation from the world, see p. 94.

(c) The Lord's Church is bigger than any church that men's hands ever formed. There is no wall that can contain the Church of God on earth, and there is no sect line that can reach round it. The Lord's garment is large enough to cover all sects, and to leave room for nations to camp under it besides.—*H. W. Beecher.*

"Lo! a great multitude of all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues." The purpose of the Lord is fixed! Idols he shall utterly abolish! The march of Christianity may have been slow and impeded, but the truth shall yet prosper and prevail; and faith, guided by the sure word of prophecy, may even now behold the wild children of the desert, the wanderers, whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them, the slaves of bloody rites, the victims of fearful delusions, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right mind, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. O glorious society, which shall thus be gathered from all ages, and all ranks, and all countries! There is beauty in diversity! There is majesty in combination! I kindle at the thought of there being a great multitude in heaven; I kindle the more at that of this multitude being drawn from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. What a throng to join in! What a company with which to associate and enter into fellowship! The righteous of past days, of the present, and the future—those who under the earlier dispensations caught faint glimpses of the star of Bethlehem—they who, possessing but a few brief notices of traditional religion, followed after God, and proved that He never left Himself without witnesses—Jews, who deciphered the types, and gave substance to the shadows of the law—Gentiles, on whom shone in all its effulgence the light of the Gospel—the mighty gathering of that splendid season when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do cover the sea." What a multitude through which to move! with which to make acquaintance! with which to hold converse!—*H. Melville, B. D.*

For another illustration on the immense numbers of the people of God, see p. 175.

(d) When society claps hands to the cry, "O Jelix!" "Oh, lucky fellow!" "Oh, rare

success!" it is the fortunate circumstances of a man's lot of which society is thinking. It is the blessedness of having a great deal of money, of being always comfortable, of being environed with what may minister to pleasure, and able always to command what one desires; it is the blessedness of condition which society crowns with its beatitudes, and to which men pay the tribute of envying it. Alas for this blessedness, which is outside the man; the blessedness of circumstance, and accident, and transient condition; the blessedness which Time's scythe mows down like grass to be cast into the oven! Not condition does Jesus bless, but character. He counts no earthly state enviable, least of all a state of unbroken ease. But the happy man is the good man. What a man is in himself, not where he is,

nor how he lives, nor how much he has, but *what a man is*, is the ground of his blessedness.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

(e) Many in these days desire the death of the righteous, but they never regard their life; they desire their end, but they will not walk in their way; they are willing to end with them, but not to begin with them; they catch for the crown, but will not come to the cross; they would taste the sweet, but they cannot abide the sweat. If we will live with Christ for ever, we must here die with Him for a season; if we will reign with Him in heaven, we must first suffer with Him on earth (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12); we can never die comfortably unless we be careful to live unblameably.—*W. Attersoll.*

THE VISION FROM THE ROCKS.

(Verse 9.)

"From the top of the rocks I see him."

It was of Israel and Israel's glory that the false seer of Pethor spoke. He stood upon the top of Moab's barren rocks, and gazed down on the happy nation whom God had delivered from Egypt, had brought through the desert, and was about to lead into the land flowing with milk and honey. It was with wonder, perhaps with envy too, that Balaam looked on the goodly tents beneath him.

So from these desert lands, and these desert hills, we gaze upon the Church on her way to Canaan, about to be settled in the blessed land and holy city. And when we gaze, what do we see?

I. The ruggedness of the land of our present sojourn.

It is the region of hostility as well as barrenness. This is not our rest. These dark mountains are not our home. We may pitch our tents among them for a season, or climb to the top to gaze around us, but they are no dwelling place for us. We may look upon Canaan from Pisgah, but Pisgah will not do for a home. Nebo lies hard by Pisgah, and Nebo tells of death, not of life—mortality is here. This is the land, not of Israel, but of Moab; and its gods are Baal, not Jehovah. We could not abide here.

II. The glorious land.

Afar off just now, but still visible, still beautiful. It is the Paradise of God; it is the new Jerusalem; the city which hath foundations; the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The vision gives us a wondrous contrast between what we are and what we shall be, making us long for the day of entrance.

III. A people delivered from a present evil world.

Once in bondage, now free; once groaning under oppression, now in the service of a heavenly Master, and heirs of the world to come; the Red Sea crossed, and now between them and their persecutors an iron wall. Forgiven and redeemed; with their backs on Egypt, and their faces to Jerusalem. "A people saved by the Lord."

IV. A people sustained by Jehovah himself.

Theirs is the hidden manna, the water from the smitten rock. Jehovah feeds them; Jehovah gives them the living water. It is not man but God who cares for them. All that they have they owe to Him who has delivered them. They feed on angel's food; nay, better, the very bread of God; on Him whose flesh is

meat indeed, whose blood is drink indeed.

V. A pilgrim band.

They are strangers on the earth ; this is not their home ; here is not their city. Their loins are girt, and their staff is in their hand, and they are hastening onward. No sitting down ; no taking ease ; no folding of their hands. Forward, still forward, is their watchword ! There is a pilgrimage, not a pleasure tour. They must not tarry.

VI. A people bought with a price.

Their ransom has been blood ; and they are not their own. Another life has gone for theirs. They have been plucked from death and the grave, because Another has died and risen for them. To that Other they belong—not to themselves, nor the flesh, nor the world.

VII. A people loved with an infinite love.

The banner that is over them is love. The song they sing is love, "Unto Him that loved us." It is a love which passeth knowledge ; a love without bound or end ; a love eternal and divine. All around and above them is love—the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They are the monuments of love ; the witnesses of love—free love, forgiving love, redeeming love ; love beyond that which angels know—

a love which constrains them, purifies them, urges them forward, gladdens all their way.

VIII. A people preparing to pass over to the goodly land.

It is within sight ; a few days, perhaps less, will bring them over. Their journey is nearly done. Their toil and weariness will soon be exchanged for rest and glory. And "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "From the top of the rocks" they can see Jerusalem, and Olivet, and Bethlehem ; and get glimpses of the whole outstretched land. It is a land of plenty, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; it is a land of light, where there is no night ; a land of blessing, where there is no curse ; a land of gladness, where sorrow comes not ; a summer land, where the frosts of winter chill not ; a calm sunny land, where storms vex not, and shadows fall not ; a land of health, where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick ;" a land of peace, where the war-trumpet never sounds ; a land of life, where corruption and mortality enter not, where death and the grave are unknown ; a land of union, where broken ties are all reknit, and broken hearts all healed (Rev. vii. 17). There Jesus reigns ; there we reign with him.—H. BONAR, D.D. From *Light and Truth*.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE IRRELIGIOUS TO THE VALUE OF RELIGION.

(Verse 10.)

The character and example of good men are influential after death. They shine upon us like stars upon the deep—to guide us onward—to allure us upward. They who have turned many to righteousness are not only blessed in their own time, but they shine as stars for ever ;—monuments of the greatness of the human mind and of the power of religion, they awaken in the bosoms of others the sparks of kindred excellence.

The works of the wicked do not perish with them. They live as beacons. "The censers of the sinners against

their own souls" were to be preserved as a memorial against them (chap. xvi. 38). A mercy if their memory could quite perish, if their evil deeds could perish.

Balaam of this order : held up to perpetual infamy. A man of fine talents—even of prophetic illumination.

I. Remarks upon this exclamation as coming from the lips of such a man.

A man of talent, genius, acquirements, great influence over the minds of others ; but not truly religious.

1. *That solemn thoughts of death and judgment may often occupy, though to little purpose, the minds of irreligious men.* They cannot hide from themselves the thoughts of mortality, nor the responsibility that follows it.

In the history of man, the last solved problem always produces a new one to solve. Three stages in the history of man—his birth—conversion—death.

We have an existence beyond death. Greatest men have died young. Alexander 33, Raffaello 30. The most pious attain elements of better nature and disposition.

After death no change—"my last end." Everything fixed at death, and for ever. This is the world of change, and of great and mighty possibilities. But when the ultimatum of life is over, all stand one unvaried, fixed, eternal character and destiny.

2. *That irreligious men are often constrained to bear a reluctant testimony in favour of religion, and against themselves.* God's love to His people is wonderful to their very enemies. "Who can count?" &c. So struck with the sight of their privileges, blessings, tents, goodly array, Balaam forgot to curse, was compelled to bless, and for once in his life to pray. Bad men envy the security and comfort of the righteous. "How many hired servants," &c. They know the worth of religion by its loss.

Perhaps that offender never lived who has not occasionally sighed to possess the mercies and blessings of the righteous. The system of irreligion that will do for health will not do for sickness. Speculations which amuse in life will not support in death.

3. *That men cheat themselves with the fallacy of wishing to die by a religion by which they are not willing to live.* This man calculated wisely for his dying hour; he ought to have calculated as wisely for his living ones. We must live by faith if we would die by it.

4. *That none go as far from God as those who fly in the face of their own convictions.* Balaam gave counsel black as the pit whence it sprung (comp. chap. xxv., and Rev. ii. 14).

II. Remarks upon this exclamation as replete with instruction to the people of God.

1. *Let this testimony confirm you in attachment to the religion you profess.* Proof that it is no cunning fable: it "is a faithful saying." "Wisdom is justified," &c. Cling with tenacity. Take the ground they give. Yield not to the claims of infidelity.

2. *Let it prompt to the cultivation of this righteousness.*

3. *Let it lighten life of its cares, and death of its terrors.*

4. *Let it prompt with compassion for irreligious men.* —Samuel Thodey.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

(Verse 10.)

The text refers to—

I. A character that we must define—"the righteous."

None are such by nature; none are such by mere education, or parental discipline; none are such by self-exertion. This character is divine, and therefore of God. It includes—

1. *Justification.* By which, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are constituted righteous, and dealt with as such (Isa. xlv. 25; Rom. iii. 26).

2. *Regeneration.* Born from above;

born of God; "partakers of the Divine nature." This is the "new man;" the holy nature which the children of God possess (John iii. 3, seq.; Col. iii. 10).

3. *Sanctification;* or the progress of the new man in holiness; the spiritual growth and advancement of the Divine life. This includes also the consecration of the heart to the service and glory of God. An increasing conformity to the holy image of the blessed God (2 Cor. iii. 18).

4. *Practical obedience;* or righteous-

ness of life. This is the great evidence of righteousness of heart. The fruit testifies that the tree is made good; the stream, that the fountain has become pure. He only is righteous who doeth righteousness. Those who "have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him," following His example, treading in His imitable footsteps. (Rom. vi. 22).

II. An event that we must illustrate—"the death of the righteous."

Even the righteous must die. The righteous of all ages, except Enoch and Elijah, have died. "It is appointed unto men," &c. But the righteous die—

1. *Under the immediate direction of God.* The wicked often die prematurely—by their own hands; by the hands of the executioner; by the power of sin producing disease; by the judgments of God. But the righteous, in life, in sickness, in old age, are the especial objects of the Divine care. They are in His hand; and "precious in His sight is the death of His saints." When their work is done, He calls them home. When they are meet for glory, he receives them to Himself.

2. *In a state of gracious security.* They die in covenant with God; with an interest in Christ; the subjects of the indwelling Spirit; heirs of glory. "Die in the Lord." "Death is theirs." Not an enemy to destroy; but a messenger to conduct them to their better home. Death cannot separate the saint from Jesus. The righteous often die—

3. *In ecstasy and triumph;* have "an abundant entrance ministered unto them," &c. Thus died Stephen, with the vision of glory before his eyes. Harken to the apostle, "I have fought a good fight," &c. So thousands and myriads. Death has been victory. "O death, where is thy sting?" &c. Thus Payson: "The battle is fought, and the victory is won." The righteous always at death—

4. *Enter upon a life of immortality.*

They are intimately present with the Lord. To die is gain, immediate, consummate, eternal gain. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," &c. Death is the gate of life—the vestibule of glory.

III. A desire that must be regulated.

"Let me die," &c. It is a very proper desire. Should be the desire of every human being. But it will be fruitless unless it is regulated—

1. *By a personal regard to the character of the righteous.* The character and the death are united; they cannot be separated. We cannot die their death if we are wicked, impenitent, merely moral, or only professors of righteousness. We must attain the spirit and principle of the righteous.

2. *By a preparation for dying.* This, by the righteous, cannot be forgotten. He therefore acts and prays and believes in reference to this solemn want. He is anxious to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man; to have the lamp and the oil, the title and the meetness. This is the only desire of any value.

3. *By a constant deference to the Divine will.* The righteous cannot suggest anything as to the mode, the place, or the circumstances of dying. They say, "My times are in Thy hand." They regard present duties and privileges, and leave all that concerns the act of dying in the Lord's hands. "All the days of my appointed time," &c. With God are the issues both of death and life.

Application.

1. *The subject of the text is solemn.* Dying is always a momentous thing, a great crisis in man's history, &c.

2. *What is your prospect respecting death?* I ask, not what you wish, but what is the well-grounded prospect?

3. *How different is the death of the wicked to that of the righteous!* Dark; the beginning of sorrows, &c. Oh! avoid this.—Jabez Burns, D.D.

HOW TO DIE WELL.

(Verse 10.)

I. How do the righteous die?

1. In the favour of God.
2. In the love of Christ.
3. Tranquilly.
4. Fitted for heaven.

II. How may we die this death?

1. Repent.
2. Turn to God.
3. Believe on Christ.
4. Live righteously.—*W. W. Wythe.*

PERSISTENCE IN THE PURSUIT OF A SINFUL PURPOSE.

(Verses 13-18.)

In these verses there are several important topics for illustration and application.

I. A wicked persistence in the pursuit of an evil purpose.

Both Balaam and Balak knew that God had prohibited the cursing of Israel (see ver. 8 and chap. xxii. 12); yet Balak is determined to have them cursed if possible. Notwithstanding that Balaam had blessed instead of cursing them, Balak will have him make another attempt, and under somewhat different conditions. "Balak said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (ver. 13). And Balaam, urged on by his cursed hunger for "the rewards of divination," is willing to serve Balak in this if he possibly can. This power of persistence in the pursuit of an object, if it had been worthily directed, might have led to great good; but in this case it is daringly and wickedly perverted. (*a*)

II. A mischievous error as to man's power to curse his fellow-man.

Balak thought that if Balaam's point of view were changed, and he saw but a small portion of the camp of Israel, he would then be able to curse them. Hence he "said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (vers. 13, 14). Balak was in error in this (see p. 424). And this error is a mischievous one. It has made men the dupes and the victims of witchcraft and priestcraft; it has hindered healthy mental and spiritual development, and

been a prolific cause of many and great evils. (*b*)

III. A grievous error as to the nature of the Divine Being.

Balaam and Balak seem to have thought that God might be induced to change His mind, by their sacrifices. For the second time they "built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram upon every altar." They regarded Him as a being who might be bribed by their gifts, or prevailed upon by their importunities. The language of God, by the Psalmist, is applicable to them: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as Thyself." How dishonouring to God is such a view of His nature! In certain forms this error survives to this day, and that in Christendom. (*c*)

IV. An illustration of the communication of the message of God to an ungodly man.

Balaam "said unto Balak, stand here by the burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder. And the Lord met Balaam," &c. (vers. 15, 16).

1. *God has access to the minds of wicked men.* Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 1-36), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii.), Balaam, iv. are examples. (*d*)

2. *God can use wicked men for the accomplishment of His own purposes.* In this way He used Balaam. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee," &c.

V. An illustration of the attention with which Divine communications should be received.

"And when he came to him, behold,

he stood by his burnt offering, &c. (vers. 17, 18). Balak was standing by his burnt offering, yet Balaam said to him, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor." It was a summons to thoughtful and

earnest attention to the Word of God, which he was about to speak to him. Not with listless ear and lethargic mind should Divine messages be heard, but with eager attention and thoughtful consideration. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There are single acts of sin, and continued or repeated acts of sin; sins committed after convictions, promises, and resolutions. Now there is not so much of guilt in a single act of sin, as there is in a continued and repeated course of sin, called (Deut. xxix. 19) "adding drunkenness to thirst," and (Isa. xxx. 1) "adding sin to sin." For as it is in numbering, so it is in sinning; if the first figure be 1, the second is 10, the third 100, the fourth 1000, and every addition makes a greater multiplication. O, what a dreadful reckoning will there be hereafter for the consciences of poor sinners!—*Flavel*.

(b) When the confessor of Louis XIV. said, "With my God in my hand and my king at my knee, I am greater than any monarch on the earth," he gave utterance to no idle boast. He only expressed, somewhat more epigrammatically, what every priest would claim in his soberest moments. In his *Catéchisme de la Persévérance*, Gaume says, "The priest, mighty as God, can, in one moment, snatch the sinner from hell, and render him worthy of Paradise, and from a slave of the devil make him a son of Abraham, and God Himself is bound to adhere to the judgment of the priest. The sentence of the priest precedes: God has only to sign it." Such are the well-known assumptions of Rome.—*Literary World*.

When John Knox began the work of reform in Glasgow, the idea prevailed that if a heretic should but touch the great bell in the church there, he would be struck dead instantly. He accepted the test on condition that the bell should be lowered into the street. He declared that it should either kill him, or he it. Then he stood over it, anathematized the church of Rome, the pope, and the wicked priests. The superstitious crowd looked in vain to see the bold heretic fall dead. Instead, men armed with hammers, at Knox's order, broke the bell into fragments. Thus a great imposture was detected, Romanism defeated, and Protestantism established.—*Dict. of Illust.*

For another illustration on *Superstition* see pp. 425, 426.

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 447.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 426, 427.

(e) Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pre-

tence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since the public ministry possesses, with regard to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages. Besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidently predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, "and go his way and straightway forget what manner of man he was." If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety, the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word: but while everything around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner, is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

Hear the Word with *attention*. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly, but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as

dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity: it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to

attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.—*Ibid.*

BALAAH'S SECOND PARABLE: THE CONSTITUENTS AND THE IRREVERSIBLNESS OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 19-24.)

Notice—

I. The constituents of the blessedness of Israel.

Balaam pronounced the Israelites blessed because of—

1. *Their covenant relation with God.*

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen distress in Israel." See *Critical and Explanatory Notes* on this verse. God cannot curse His chosen people. He must bless them with His favour and with all covenant blessings. So long as they do not utterly forsake Him He will protect and bless them. (a)

2. *The presence of God with them.*

"The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." Here are two ideas:—(1) God was present with them as their King. The government of Israel was a theocracy. Jehovah Himself was their sovereign. (2) His presence produced exultation. "The shout of a King" is the jubilant celebration by Israel of the presence of Jehovah in their midst as their King. His presence was a guarantee of success in their great enterprise, of victory over their enemies, &c. God is still with His people as their King and their God. (b)

3. *The doings of God for them.* "God brought them out of Egypt." Keil and Del. translate: "God brings them out of Egypt;" and remark that "the participle is not used for the preterite, but designates the leading out as still going on, and lasting till the introduction into Canaan." Looked at in this light, the clause before us refers to the

whole of God's doings for them, by means of which they were led forth from Egypt, and ultimately brought into the Promised Land. It includes:—(1) Emancipation from Egypt. (2) Direction in their journeys. (3) Protection from their enemies. (4) Provision in the wilderness. (5) Possession of Canaan. And in this Christian dispensation God works graciously and gloriously in and for His people. He delivers from a bondage far worse than that of Israel in Egypt, &c.

4. *The revelation of His will to them.*

"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob," &c. (ver. 23). Margin: "in Jacob." See the translation and note by Keil and Del. in *Critical and Explanatory Notes*. We take the verse to mean that the art of the soothsayer was not practised amongst the Israelites; but God Himself, by means of His own appointment, and in due season, revealed to them His own designs and doings. He communicated with them through the high priest by means of the Urim and Thummim; He spake by Moses, and afterwards by the Prophets and the sacred poets. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." The teachings of Christ and His apostles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are granted to the spiritual Israel in this age.

5. *The victorious power He bestows upon them.* "He hath as it were the strength of a buffalo," or a wild bull. "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down

until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Because Jehovah was with them as their King and Leader, they went forward with the strength of a wild ox—an indomitable animal, and terrible by reason of its horns (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 17; Psa. xxii. 21). And when they arose to battle they would not retreat until they had obtained complete victory. They would conquer their enemies, and take possession of the Promised Land. Let Balak, then, be warned, and abandon the vain hope of vanquishing this victorious and blessed people. And God's spiritual Israel shall conquer all their spiritual enemies, and take possession of that inheritance of which Canaan, even at best, was but a poor type. "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

II. The irreversibility of the blessedness of Israel.

The blessedness of the people of God cannot be reversed because—

1. *It rests upon the unchangeableness of God.* "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent," &c. (c)

2. *It is beyond the power of their enemies.* "Behold, I have received to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." All the sacrifices which Balak the king could offer, and all the arts which Balaam the soothsayer could exercise, would not turn aside the blessing of God from His people. No power either in earth or in hell can effectually curse those whom God hath blessed.

Conclusion.

1. *Are we members of the spiritual Israel of God?*

2. *Let us, then, be faithful to our covenant engagements, and rejoice in our privileges.*

3. *Let those who are aliens from the spiritual Israel believe in Christ Jesus and share its blessedness* (Eph. ii. 12).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The new covenant exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with Divine precepts: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1), *i.e.*, sincere. What is hearty in our actions, is accepted; and what is defective, is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our Surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin; the services of a person under sentence of death, are but dead services: this accepts our imperfect services, after faith in it; that administered no strength to obey, but supposed it; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). Again, in regard of the promises: the old covenant had good, but the new hath "better promises" (Heb. viii. 6), of justification after guilt, and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first, there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it; provision against filth, but none for the cleansing of it; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that "life and immortality" in heaven, "brought to light by the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Life

indeed was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed, to be reserved for him, if he stood. As it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts; comforts more choice, and comforts more durable; an "everlasting consolation and a good hope" are the fruits of "grace," *i.e.* the covenant of grace (2 Thess. ii. 16). In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed; the Apostle leaves it to every man's mind to conceive it, if he could, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). It instates us in such a manner of the love of God as He bears to His Son the image of His Person (John xvii. 23): "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."—*Charnocke*.

(b) As He gave the blood of His Son to seal the covenant, so He gave Himself as the blessing of the covenant: "He is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. xi. 16). He is not only our God, but our God as He is the God of Christ: He is not ashamed to be our propriety, and Christ is not ashamed to own His people in a partnership with Him in this propriety (John xx. 17), "I ascend to My God, and your God." This, of God's being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises; in this He hath promised, whatsoever is infinite in Him, whatsoever is

the glory and ornament of His nature, for our use; not a part of Him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigour and strength of all. . . . Thus, God's being ours, is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own dispose; it makes "all things that God hath ours" (1 Cor. iii. 22); and, therefore, not only all things that He hath created, but all things that He can create; not only all things that He hath contrived, but all things that he can contrive; for in being ours, His power is ours, His possible power as well as His active power; His power, whereby He can effect more than He hath done, and His wisdom, whereby He can contrive more than He hath done; so that if there were need of employing His power to create many worlds for our good, He would not stick at it, for if He did, He would not be our God, in the extent of His nature, as the promise intimates.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations of the Blessedness of the People of God, see pp. 154, 346, 347.

(c) Independent of all possible beings and events, Jehovah sits at the head of the universe, unchanged, and incapable of change, amid all the successions, tossings and tumults, by which it is agitated. When empires are overthrown, or angels fall; when suns are extinguished, and systems return to their original nothing: He is equally impassive and unmoved as when sparrows expire, or the hair falls from our heads. Nothing can happen,

nothing can be done beyond His expectation, or without His permission. Nothing can frustrate His designs, and nothing disappoint or vary His purposes. All things, beside Him, change, and fluctuate without ceasing. Events exist and vanish. Beings rise and expire. But His own existence, the thoughts which He entertains, the desires which He admits, the purposes which He forms, are "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Throughout the coming vast of eternity also, and the boundless tracts of immensity, He sees with serene complacency His own perfect purposes daily and invariably advancing, with a regular fulfilment, towards their absolute completion. In its own place, in its own time, and in its own manner, each exists in exact obedience to His order, and in exact accordance with His choice; nothing lingers, nothing hastens; but His counsel exactly stands, and all His pleasure will be precisely accomplished.—*Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

"What makes you think that God will never forsake them that trust in Him?" was asked of an aged Christian. "Because He has promised," was the reply. "And what makes you think that He will keep His word?" "Because He never yet broke it." Here is encouragement for us all! Here is cause to cry aloud, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The past declares God's faithfulness, the present confirms it, and the future will only make more clear His fidelity and truth.—*Anon.*

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF JEHOVAH.

(Verse 19.)

To unfold the full meaning of these words, we observe—

I. Some men think that God will lie.

God has told us, with strong and repeated asseverations, that "we must be born again" (John iii. 7); but this is totally disbelieved by—

1. *The profane.* They persuade themselves that such strictness in religion, as is implied in the new birth, is not necessary; and that they shall go to heaven in their own way.

2. *The self-righteous.* These consider regeneration as a dream of weak enthusiasts; and are satisfied with the "form of godliness, without" ever experiencing "the power" of it.

3. *The hypocritical professors of religion.* These, having changed their creed, together with their outward conduct, fancy themselves Christians,

notwithstanding their faith neither "overcomes the world," nor "works by love," nor "purifies their hearts."

That all these persons think God will lie, is evident beyond a doubt; for if they really believed that old things must pass away and all things become new (2 Cor. v. 17), before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven, they would feel concerned to know whether any such change had taken place in them; nor would they be satisfied till they had a Scriptural evidence that they were indeed "new creatures in Christ Jesus." But as this is in no respect the case with them, it is manifest that they do not believe the record of God, and, consequently, however harsh the expression may seem, they make God a liar (1 John v. 10).

II. Others fear He may lie.

This is common with persons—

1. *Under conviction of sin.* When men are deeply convinced of sin, they find it exceedingly difficult to rest simply on the promises of the Gospel; such as John vi. 37; Isa. i. 18; lv. 1. This appears too good to be true: they cannot conceive how God should “justify the ungodly” (Rom. iv. 5), and therefore they seek to become godly first, in order that they may be justified: and if they cannot bring some price in their hands, they keep back, and give themselves over to desponding fears.

2. *Under temptation or desertion.* God has declared that He will not suffer His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). But when they come into temptation, they are apt to say, as David, “I shall one day perish,” &c. (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). They see no way for their escape; and therefore they fear that the very next wave will overwhelm them utterly. If God at such seasons hide His face from them, they conclude, “there is no hope;” they think “His mercy clean gone for ever,” &c. (Psa. lxxvii. 7-9), notwithstanding God has so frequently and so expressly declared, that He will never leave them nor forsake them.

Now these persons do not, like the ungodly, deliberately *think* that God *will* lie; but they have many *fears* lest He *should*; if it were not so, they would take God at His word, and stay themselves on Him when they are in darkness (Isa. i. 10).

III. But God neither will nor can lie.

1. *He will not lie.* (1) Let us hear the testimonies of those who have tried Him. Moses (Deut. xxxii. 4); Joshua (John xxiii. 14); Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 29). (2) Let us attend to God’s own assertions and appeals. Isa. v. 4; xlix. 19. Would He ever venture to speak thus strongly on His own behalf, if His creatures could make good their accusations against Him? (3) Let us look to matter of fact. He threatened

to punish the angels if they should prove disobedient: He denounced a curse on Adam if he should eat of the forbidden tree; He threatened to destroy the whole world with a deluge; to overwhelm Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone; and to scatter His once chosen people over the face of the whole earth. See now whether he has forborne to execute any of these threatenings. He also promised to send His only, dear Son to die for sinners; and to make Him great among the Gentiles, while His own nation should almost universally reject Him. Have either of these promises been forgotten? Or, if such promises and such threatenings have received their accomplishment, is there any reason to doubt respecting any others that are yet unfulfilled? Are not His past actions so many types and pledges of what He will hereafter perform? (2 Pet. ii. 4-9; Jude 7.)

2. *He cannot lie.* Truth is as essential to the Divine nature as goodness, wisdom, power, or any other attribute; so that He can as easily cease to be good, or wise, or powerful, as He can suffer one jot or tittle of His word to fail. If for one moment He could divest Himself of truth, He would cease to be deserving of all confidence or affection. Let it only be said of any *man*—“he is great and wise and generous, but no dependence can be placed on his word,” would he not on the whole be deemed a contemptible character? How then would Jehovah be degraded, if any such infirmity could be laid to His charge! “God cannot lie” (Tit. i. 2); “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. ii. 13); “It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. vi. 18). It is God’s honour that He neither will nor can lie.

Infer,—

1. *How vain are the expectations of unconverted men!* Men, whatever may be their state, persuade themselves that they shall be happy when they die. But how delusive must be that hope, which is built upon the expectation that God will prove Himself

a liar! Let us lay aside all such delusive hopes, &c.

2. *How groundless are the fears of the converted!* There is a holy fear that is highly desirable for every one, however eminent, however established. But there is a tormenting, slavish fear that arises from unbelief, and which greatly retards our progress in the Divine life. Now we ask, Does this fear arise from an apprehension of our own unfaithfulness, or of God's? If it be God's faithfulness that we doubt, let us know that His "gifts and callings are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29, with the words following the text), and that where He hath begun a good work, He will perfect it unto the day of

Christ (Phil. i. 6). If, on the other hand, we suspect our own faithfulness, let us recollect on whom our faithfulness depends (2 Cor. iii. 5; Zech. iv. 6). God has promised not only that He will not depart from us, but that He will put His fear in our hearts, so that we shall not depart from Him (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40).

Let us then "set to our seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). Let us commit ourselves to Him, knowing Whom we have believed (2 Tim. i. 12), and assured that while we stand on the foundation of His Word, we are immovably secure (2 Tim. ii. 19).—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

THE VERACITY OF GOD.

(Verse 19.)

Introduction—

Remarks on the character of Balaam, and the circumstances that led to the utterance of his prophecy.

I. Here is a purpose pre-supposed.

1. He saw Israel as the objects of the Divine protection, so that all the devices of their enemies were rendered vain.

2. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the face of all opposition.

3. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the tokens of the Divine presence and power with which they were accompanied.

II. The ground of this stability asserted.

1. God *Himself* is unchangeable.

2. He is so in His will and purpose.

3. There is no cause why God should alter. Three causes of change of mind in man not applicable to God:—(1) Want of foreknowledge. (2) Natural instability. (3) Want of power.

III. Inferences.

1. The perpetual obligation of religion.

2. Reproof of the inconstancy of man.

3. It directs us where alone we may safely put our trust.

4. It teaches patience under His providences.

5. An awful warning to sinners.—*Anon.*

GOD'S BLESSING IRREVERSIBLE.

(Verse 20.)

The text is connected with three illustrious orders of persons: Balak, king of Moab; Balaam, the wicked prophet; and the Israelites, who were journeying to the Land of Promise. Balak hated the Israelites, and was anxious to bring evil, &c. Balaam

hired himself to curse them; but God frustrated his evil design, and out of the lips hired to curse, God pronounced a blessing. Here is the wicked prophet's confession, "He hath blessed," &c.

I. God's people are blessed of Him.

So it was with Israel of old. God

blessed them by wonderful deliverances, and countless tokens of his favour. His compassionate eye was on them in Egypt; His arm led them out; His bounty supplied their wants; His presence guided—shielded them, &c. God has now His Israel in the world: all the spiritual seed of Abraham; all those who have believed in the Messiah; all who are travelling to a better country. On these His blessing rests. “He hath blessed”—

1. *With pardoning mercy.*
2. *With delivering grace.*
3. *With spiritual supplies.*
4. *With all needful good.*

Now this applies to every age of the world—to every true Israelite.

II. His blessing cannot be reversed.

1. *Wicked men would, but cannot.*
2. *Satan would, but cannot.*
3. *God does not desire to do so, and therefore will not.*

We may reject the blessing—backslide from God; but His “gifts and calling are without repentance.”

Application.

1. *Are we His people?*
2. *Then we have His blessing.*
3. *And this is all-sufficient.—Jabez Burns, D.D.*

THE STABILITY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS.

(Verse 23.)

We cannot but admire the endowments of this bold, bad man: we envy him the privilege he enjoyed of beholding the visions of the Almighty, and being favoured with His express communications; we look with astonishment at the perseverance which he manifested, worthy of a better cause; and we may allow ourselves to be charmed with his eloquence and edified by his prophetic anticipations. But when we have done this, there remains an awful contrast of warning: gloomy shades darken and deform a picture, some of the features of which appear clothed in the beauty and brightness of heaven. We see the loftiest qualifications of which human nature can boast—genius, literature, a great name, and even prophetic skill, devoted to the most execrable purposes, employed in direct opposition to God and His Church, and finally recoiling upon their possessor and drowning his soul in perdition. Like many in our own day, Balaam sees the good, but prefers the evil; he pursues the world, and turns his back upon God, in spite of the appearance of the Angel, the remonstrance of conscience, and the immediate voice of Heaven; he makes religion the cloak of the most ambitious purposes; he

numbers himself with those who “love the wages of unrighteousness,” and upon whose tombs God Himself has written the epitaph,—“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved,” &c.

I. The stability of the church is distinctly asserted.

What was true 3,000 years ago, is not worthy of less credit and less attention now. The times are changed, but the men are not. There is now as certain a combination against the Church of the Living God, as there was when Balaam took up his parable, and Balak listened for the curse upon Israel. But while the enemies remain the same, the promise remains unchanged. Every age has heard the cry, “Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.” But then every age has heard the language, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. What a confession is this of Balaam! how humiliating to himself, how instructive to us! Trace the particulars.

1. *The most base and desperate measures have always been used against the church.* Balaam evidently avows that the mean arts of divination and enchantment had been used. He acknowledges, in fact, that the church's enemies could not meet her in the open

field. Curses are the last resource of cowards—a confession of weakness. And so it has always been. Infidelity is not ashamed to use poisoned weapons—to stoop to the meanest devices to harass a cause which it is always ashamed to face. Some men have so great a hatred to the cause of Christ, that they will condescend to seek help from hell itself rather than fail. Hence every stratagem is employed; all the arts of calumny, and wickedness, and falsehood, are put in requisition to prevent the progress of truth and poison the mind against it. How weak that cause must be which stoops to such wretched devices! and how triumphant and glorious must that religion be, which, though unarmed, can defy them all! “The rains descended . . . and it fell not,” &c.

2. *These attacks are utterly fruitless and vain.* “There is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. The enemies of the truth, however loudly they may boast at the onset, have always retired in confusion, and for the most part in despair. It is like shooting arrows against the sun: they return upon the heads of those who aimed them, while the sun pursues its glorious way uninjured and undisturbed. It is like attempting to stem the ocean with a bulrush: you may perish in the attempt, but you cannot hope to succeed. Let those who hate the truth, consider by whom that truth is supported—how long that truth has stood—how often it has been assailed, and how certain the overthrow of its enemies. Like Job’s leviathan, “the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold,” &c. “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?” &c. “If this counsel or this work be of man, it will come to nought,” &c. (Acts v. 38, 39).

3. *The source of Israel’s safety is directly ascribed to God.* “What hath God wrought!” The world is right in its estimate of the feebleness of the Church of Christ in herself. We wonder not at their boasts, their scorn.

We wonder not to hear them say, “What do these feeble Jews?” We know she is a bruised reed; but we also know that she is strong in the strength of Another. It is delightful to hear from an enemy—(1) the faithfulness of God advanced as the security of the church (ver. 19). (2) The impotency of his own arts acknowledged. “I cannot reverse it” (ver. 20). (3) The mercy of God asserted as the comfort of His people (ver. 21). (4) The records of antiquity explored to confirm the position (ver. 22). Futurity opened up as disclosing their triumphs (ver. 24).

How is all this confirmed by the history of that very moment! Israel was resting in his tents, ignorant of the plotting of Balak and the prophecy of Balaam. Moses knew nothing of it while all this mischief was going on. But God is both a sure and a secret friend. He restrains countless evils of which we know nothing. “He that keepeth thee will not slumber,” &c.

4. *The season of our greatest dangers becomes the date of our noblest triumphs.* “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob,” &c. God delays till the hour of extremity.

5. *Our best blessings are frequently pronounced by our worst enemies.* How cheering is it to observe this—the enemies with one breath pronouncing our stability, with the next their own overthrow. “There shall come a star out of Jacob,” &c. A volume might be filled with the confessions of the enemy. “Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

II. *The security of believers follows on the same principles.*

They are exposed to similar attacks. The world tries its enchantments. False friends and real enemies endeavour to hinder,—watch for our halting, &c. Satan tempts, opposes, &c.

The same promises are our supports. Condescend to learn of an enemy. God’s simple word was enough for Balaam. Apply it to our experiences in life, to death.—*Samuel Thodey.*

BALAAM'S DECLARATION OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

(Verse 23.)

How true is the text of Israel of old. No evil spirit of enchantment could affect them. No spirit of divination injure them. The magicians of Egypt could mimic Moses, but only in adding to the misery of the Egyptians; but neither earth nor hell can injure those who trust in the Lord; "for He is their help and shield."

Applying our text to the Church of God in general, consider—

1. The important truth affirmed.

"Surely there is no enchantment," &c. We enter not into the discussion how far men may have had power to enchant, to divine, or to curse others. But we abide by the text, that there is no such thing against the cause and people of God. Hell is opposed to the cause of God, and united with it are the wicked powers of earth. They have the disposition, the will, the purpose, and may make the attempt to injure the Church; but their efforts must fail, their plots must be frustrated, their attacks must be powerless. Yet sometimes they have been allowed to harass and vex and torture the people of God. Sometimes they have apparently succeeded and triumphed; but really and eventually, they must be frustrated. "Surely there is no enchantment," &c. Now the certainty of this may be inferred—

1. *Because the counsels of God are more than sufficient to baffle the designs and plots of hell.* We would not array human skill and tact against the wiles and stratagems of the devil. But the security of the Church depends on the counsels of God—on the influence and wisdom of the Most High. He knows how to frustrate the devices of evil; and how to deliver those who trust in His name. Hell has no covering before Him. He is the watcher and keeper of Israel, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2. *Because the power of Jehovah is ever effectual in resisting the attacks of*

the enemies of His people. Divine wisdom and omniscience are united with resistless power. His mandate gave being to the universe. "He spake, and it was." All created power is mere impotency before Him. How then can the power of evil ruin the Church, and overthrow the cause of the Eternal?

3. *Because Divine goodness is more than enough to counteract the malevolence of the Church's foes.* The wisdom and power of God are combined with immeasurable love. The interests of the Church are those of God's heart. His people are as the apple of His eye. He has covenanted with them to sustain, to keep, to preserve, to deliver, to glorify.

4. *The resources of God are more than adequate to render all the means of the Church's enemies abortive.* The enemy can combine various elements of evil. The craft, subtlety, and power of fallen legions—the wealth and influence of the world—the fashions of the earth, &c. And all these have successively been employed. But all resources are Jehovah's. The angels of His presence, the stars of heaven, the sun, and the moon, storms and winds, and tempests, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. He often makes the wrath of man to praise Him. On these grounds we may say, "Surely there is no enchantment," &c.

II. The triumphant exclamation uttered.

"According to this time it shall be said," &c. Observe:

1. *What is to be said.* "What hath God wrought!" All deliverances, &c., are to be traced up to God. Agency may be observed; but God only praised. God alone is to have the glory, as He has had the real work of delivering His people. (1) This is to keep up our dependence on God. (2) To inspire with admiration and praise. (3) To keep human nature in its right place. Not

what Moses, or Joshua, or Gideon, or David, or the apostles, or the martyrs, or the reformers, or Wesley, or Whitfield; but "what God hath wrought." There is a tendency to lose sight of God, or to make Him secondary. But it ought ever to be, "What hath God wrought!"

2. *Who are to say it.* Sometimes even enemies have said it. Balak was forced to see it, and the covetous prophet to speak it. (1) But it should be said especially by the ministers of the Gospel. They are to draw attention to the doings of Jehovah—to "speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power," &c. (2) It should be said by all the pious. Parents to their children. Teachers to their pupils. Christians to one another. Thus the Psalmist, lxxvii. 11, &c., Isa. xii. 4, &c.

3. *When it should be said.* (1) In times of depression as a means of en-

couragement. (2) In times of great exertion as an incitement to perseverance. (3) In times of great success, to give tone to our exultings. (4) It will be reiterated in the world of the beatified for ever. Then they will see in one beautiful series the doings of God,—behold the golden chain entire, &c.

Application.

1. *Our text may apply to many as to their Christian experience before God.* Remember all the way God hath led you, &c. What 'great things He hath done for you.

2. *May it not apply to this Christian Church and congregation?* What hath God wrought here for you, in you, by you? &c.

3. *Let God ever be exalted by His Church and people for the blessings they enjoy, and all the good done in them, and by them.*—Jabez Burns, D.D.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOD, AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WHICH IT DEMANDS.

(Verse 23, latter portion.)

"According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!"

The text directs us to—

I. The source of effectual blessing.

It directs us to the Deity, in His essential character; in His active character; and in His relative character. And what is the interference we wish? Various. Sometimes—

1. *Deliverance*—from danger internal and external—"enchantment."

2. *Blessing*. "I have received commandment to bless," &c.

3. *Forbearance*. "He hath not beheld iniquity," &c.

4. *Stability*. "The Lord his God is with him."

5. *Complete success*.

II. The time from which His interposition is remarked.

"According to this time it shall be said." The time of—

1. *Conversion*.

2. *Renewed devotion*.

3. *Peculiar providential arrangement*.

4. *Earnest and decisive spirit of prayer*.

III. The acknowledgment it demands.

"It shall be said, What hath God wrought!"

1. *Acknowledgment is implied and expected*. "God wrought."

2. *It is spontaneously offered*. "It shall be said."

3. *It is a personal and explicit token*. "Jacob and Israel."

4. *It is to be recorded and gratefully renewed*. "According to this time it shall be said," &c.—Samuel Thodey.

(Verses 25 and 26.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes on ver. 25, and Homiletical remarks on vers. 11, 12.

(Verses 27—30.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes and Homiletical remarks on vers. 1, 2, 13, 14, and Explanatory Note on ver. 28.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *To seek for enchantments.* See Notes on chap. xxiii. 3, 23.

He set his face toward the wilderness, i.e., towards the plains of Moab, where the Israelites were encamped.

Verse 2. *Saw Israel abiding, &c.* Keil and Del.: "He saw Israel encamping according to its tribes."

The Spirit of God came upon him. "The impression made upon him by the sight of the tribes of Israel, served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him. Of both the earlier utterances it is stated that 'Jehovah put a word into his mouth' (chap. xxiii. 5, 16); but of this third it is affirmed that 'the Spirit of God came over him.' The former were communicated to him, where he went out for a Divine revelation, without his being thrown into an ecstatic state; he heard the voice of God within him telling him what he was to say. But this time, like the prophets in their prophesyings, he was placed by the Spirit of God in a state of ecstatic sight; so that, with his eyes closed as in clairvoyance, he saw the substance of the revelation from God with his inward mental eye, which had been opened by the Spirit of God."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Whose eyes are open.* Margin: "Who had his eyes shut, but now opened." Dr. A. Clarke takes the latter view: "I believe the original שָׁתָם, *shethum*, should be translated *shut*, not *open*; for in the next verse, where the opening of the eyes is mentioned, a widely different word is used נָלָה, *galah*, which signifies to *open* or *reveal*. At first the eyes of Balaam were *shut*, and so closely too that he could not *see* the angel who withstood him, till God *opened* his eyes; nor could he see the gracious intentions of God towards Israel, till the eyes of his understanding were opened by the power of the Divine Spirit."

н н 2

שָׁתָם הָעֵין, "with closed eye.

שָׁתָם does not mean to open, a meaning in support of which only one passage of the *Mishnah* can be adduced, but to close, like סָתָם in Dan. viii. 26, and שָׁתָם in Lam. iii. 8, with the ש softened into ס or ש. 'Balaam describes himself as the man with closed eye with reference to his state of ecstasy, in which the closing of the outer senses went hand in hand with the opening of the inner' (*Hengstenberg*). The cessation of all perception by means of the outer senses, so far as self-conscious reflection is concerned, was a feature that was common to both the vision and the dream, the two forms in which the prophetic gift manifested itself (chap. xii. 6), and followed from the very nature of the inward intuition. In the case of prophets whose spiritual life was far advanced, inspiration might take place without any closing of the outward senses. But upon men like Balaam, whose inner religious life was still very impure and undeveloped, the Spirit of God could only operate by closing their outward senses to impressions from the lower earthly world, and raising them up to visions of the higher and spiritual world."—*Keil and Del.*

Fuerst however renders שָׁתָם הָעֵין, "opened of eye, i.e., with opened eye." So also the *Speaker's Comm. et al.*

Verse 4. *Falling, &c.* Omit the "into a trance" of the A.V. Keil and Del. translate, "Falling down and with opened eyes." Balaam fell beneath the power of the Spirit of God, who came upon him (comp. 1 Sam. xix. 24). In this way the eyes of his spirit were opened.

Verse 7. *He shall pour the water, &c.* Or, "Water will flow out of his buckets." Or, "He shall stream with water out of his buckets." An image of great prosperity; an abundant supply of

water being essential to fertility and prosperity in the burning East. "The nation is personified as a man carrying two pails overflowing with water."

His seed, i.e., posterity.

"*By many waters*," a metaphor indicative of rich blessings, particularly in this place, that of a numerous posterity.

Agag, a title common to all the Amalekite kings, as *Pharaoh* was to those of Egypt. "The reason for mentioning the king of the Amalekites was, that he was selected as the impersonation of the enmity of the world against the kingdom of God, which culminated in the kings of the heathen; the Amalekites having been the first heathen tribe that attacked the Israelites on their journey to Canaan (Exod. xvii. 8)" — *Keil and Del.*

His king his kingdom. "The king of Israel, whose greatness was celebrated by Balaam, was neither the Messiah exclusively, nor the earthly kingdom without the Messiah, but the kingdom of Israel that was established by David, and was exalted in the Messiah into an everlasting kingdom, the enemies of which would all be made its footstool (Psa. ii. and cx.)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 8. See chap. xxiii. 22.

Verse 9. See chap. xxiii. 24.

Verse 11. *Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour.* "A bitter and impious sarcasm."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 14. *Advertise thee.* Keil and Del.: "'Tell thee advisedly.' . . . An announcement which includes advice."

Verse 17. *A Star, &c.* "In all the typical language of Scripture stars are symbols of lordship and authority, ecclesiastical or civil. Thus a star is the symbol of the highest dominion of all: 'There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob;' and the actual birth of Him whom Balaam prophesied of here, is announced by a star (Matt. ii. 2; cf. Isa. xiv. 12)."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

A Sceptre, &c. (comp. Gen. xlix. 10).

The corners of Moab. Rather, "the two sides of Moab," "equivalent to Moab on both sides, from one end to the other."

Destroy all the children of Sheth.

Speaker's Comm.: "Overthrow the sons of tumult." Keil and Del.: "'Destroy all the sons of confusion,' by which the Moabites are to be understood as being men of wild, warlike confusion."

Verse 18. *Edom shall be a possession, &c.* "Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power" (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Chron. xviii. 11-13; Obad. 17 sqq.).

Verse 19. *He that shall have dominion, i.e., the ruler foretold as Star and Sceptre.* "The Star and Sceptre of the prophecy, like the 'Sceptre' and 'Lawgiver' of Gen. xlix. 10, point naturally rather to a line of princes than to an individual; or rather are emblems of the kingdom of Israel generally. Thus the victories of David and his successors, generation after generation, over Edom and Moab, are unquestionably recurring and progressive accomplishments of what Balaam foretold; but after all of them the prophecy yet reaches forward to some further and culminating accomplishment; and that too in 'the latter days' (ver. 14), the ordinary prophetic designation for the time of the Messiah (cf. Dan. x. 14).

"To a Christian, the connection between the Star and Sceptre of Balaam, and the Star of the King of the Jews, which the wise men saw (Matt. ii. 2), is self-evident. As they were 'wise men from the east,' so was Balaam also a 'wise man from the east' (cf. xxiii. 7); and the tradition that they were, if not descendants, yet fellow countrymen, of Balaam, and occupied in pursuits kindred to his, is probable enough." — *Speaker's Comm.*

Destroy him that remaineth, &c. "The phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives till he has cut off all of every place (cf. 1 Kings xi. 16)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *Amalek was the first, &c., i.e., pre-eminent amongst the states or nations which Balaam then had in view of his mind's eye.* The sense given by the marginal rendering is doubtful.

Verse 21. *The Kenites.* "A tribe or nation whose history is strangely inter-

woven with that of the chosen people. Their origin is hidden from us. But we may fairly infer that they were a branch of the larger nation of Midian—from the fact that Jethro, the father of Moses's wife, who in the records of Exodus (see ii. 15, 16; iv. 19, &c.), is represented as dwelling in the land of Midian, and as priest or prince of that nation, is in the narrative of Judges (i. 16; iv. 11), as distinctly said to have been a Kenite. As Midianites, they were therefore descended immediately from Abraham by his wife Keturah, and in this relationship and their connexion with Moses we find the key to their continued alliance with Israel.”—*Bible Dict.*

Verse 22. *The Kenite.* Heb.: *Kain*. The *Speaker's Comm.* says that *Kain* is “the name of the Kenites abode.” Keil and Del.: “*Kain*, the tribe-father, is used poetically for the *Kenite*, the tribe of which he was the founder.” And Fuerst regards it as the name of the tribe. A more faithful rendering of this verse is, “For Kain shall not be destroyed until Asshur shall carry

him away captive.” It is a promise of long-continued safety to the Kenites.

Verse 23. *Alas, who shall live, &c.* “The words, ‘Woe, who will live,’ point to the fearfulness of the following judgment, which went deep to the heart of the seer, because it would fall upon the sons of his own people. The meaning is, ‘Who will preserve his life in the universal catastrophe that is coming?’ (*Hengstenberg.*)”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 24. *Chittim*, “i.e. Cyprus, the nearest of the western islands, the only one visible from Palestine, and so the representative to Balaam and to Israel of all those unknown western regions across the Mediterranean Sea, from which were at length to come the conquerors of the mighty empires of the East (cf. Isa. xxiii. 1, 12; Jer. ii. 10).”—*Speaker's Comm.*

Eber, “i.e., not as Vulg. and LXX., ‘the Hebrews,’ but generally the descendants of Shem.”—*Ibid.*

He also, “i.e., the conqueror of Asshur and Eber, who should come across the sea.”—*Ibid.*

BALAAH'S THIRD PARABLE: THE GLORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 1-9.)

This paragraph contains two main divisions:

I. The preparation of the prophet to declare the divine will (vers. 1-4).

1. *Balaam renounces the search for auguries.* “And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments.” The sacrifices were offered as at former times, but Balaam goes no more apart to look for auguries. He seems to have despaired of accomplishing the desire of Balak by any exercise of his art.

2. *He beholds the encampment of Israel.* “He set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel encamping according to their tribes.” He seems to have gazed on the imposing spectacle

beneath him, and to have allowed it freely to influence him. Its order, unity, vastness, and might, seem to have deeply impressed him. And the impression produced by that sight “served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him.”

3. *He is inspired by the Holy Spirit.* “And the Spirit of God came upon him” (see Critical and Explanatory Notes on ver. 2). He had, as Attersoll remarks, “the Holy Spirit, but not the spirit of holiness; for whosoever He worketh He is holy, but He doth not always work holiness and sanctification, which evermore accompany salvation.” Balaam was inspired to utter the Divine message; but his heart was perverse and corrupt, &c.

4. *He hears Divine words and sees Divine visions.* "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man with closed eye hath said: he hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling down and with opened eyes" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes on vers. 3, 4). The senses of Balaam now seem to be closed to external impressions, and, for the time being, the Spirit of God has the mastery of his nature, and by voice and by vision reveals the will of God to him. Thus the Lord prepared him for the declaration of His holy will. Do not these words of Balaam display his egotism and pride in his own privileges and power? Keil and Del. hold that they do not. "This introduction to his prophecy is not an utterance of boasting vanity; but, as Calvin correctly observes, 'the whole preface has no other tendency than to prove that he was a true prophet of God, and had received the blessing which he uttered from a celestial oracle.'" We are unable to take this view of his preface. To us it "savours very much of pride and vain glory, taking all the praise of this prophecy to himself, and magnifying himself as one of the cabinet-council of heaven. Paul speaks with humility of his visions and revelations (2 Cor. xii. 1); but Balaam speaks of his with pride." (a)

II. The declaration by the prophet of Israel's glory (verses 5-9).

The blessing here pronounced is in its substance very similar to those in the preceding chapter. Balaam declares—

1. *Their beautiful appearance* (vers. 5, 6). Here are three ideas (1) *Beauty*. The beauty of *order*. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (b) *And the beauty of culture and fertility*. "As the valleys are spread forth, as gardens by the river's side." To the mind's eye of the seer, the dwellings of Israel in Canaan spread themselves abroad with the loveliness of fertile valleys, and even as gardens

along the banks of a river, "which are still more lovely than the grassy and flowery valleys" (comp. Deut. viii. 7, 8). (c) (2) *Fragrance*. "As the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted." "The aloe, imported from China and the far distant east, furnished to the ancients one of the most fragrant and precious spices (cf. Psal. xlv. 8), 'All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia' (Prov. vii. 17)." So the reputation of Israel should be fragrant. Their character and condition should produce a delightful impression upon their neighbours. (3) *Majesty*. "As cedar trees beside the waters." "The noblest of trees branching forth in the fairest of situations; an image of majestic beauty." The beauty of Israel is set forth in a somewhat similar manner in Hos. xiv. 5, 7. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold." The truly godly man is beautiful in his principles and spirit, in his character and conduct. "The beauty of the Lord our God is upon" him.

2. *Their prosperous condition*. Two aspects of prosperity are probably presented by the prophet:—(1) A fertile soil. "He shall pour the water out of his buckets" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). (2) A numerous posterity. "His seed shall be in many waters." Abundant and unfailing prosperity and increase are thus proclaimed as the portion of Israel. And very remarkable was their prosperity at all times when they were faithful to the Lord; and their increase was wonderful.

3. *Their exalted position*. "And his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). The glories of the kingdom of Israel were to far exceed those of their heathen neighbours. We may perhaps find the fulfilment of this prediction in the prosperity and power of the kingdom during the latter part of the reign of David and the greater part of that of his successor. But its most

splendid fulfilment is to be looked for in the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah.

4. *Their conquering power.* This is exhibited in several aspects—(1) Their great *strength*. This is seen in what God had done for them. "God leads him forth out of Egypt." And in their present condition. "He hath as it were the strength of a wild bull." The people were strong because God was with them as their leader, &c. (see on chap. xxiii. 22). (2) Their great *conquests*. "He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows." The words point to the complete victory of Israel over their enemies, and their enrichment by means of such conquests. (d) (3) Their great *security*. "He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?" "They were to overcome their foes thoroughly, that none of them would venture to rise up against them again." The prophet's words present

a striking picture of assured security. Who shall dare to arouse a sleeping lion? During a great part of the reign of David, and during that of Solomon, Israel was thus secure. When His people are faithful to Him, God guarantees their safety. "The work of righteousness shall be peace," &c. (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18). (e). (4) Their great *influence*, as a blessing to their friends, and as a bane to their enemies. "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." For this cause, let Balak and all their enemies take warning. God makes His people's cause His own. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Here is *encouragement* to the people of God and to their friends. Here is *warning* to their enemies.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) From first to last one thing appears uppermost in this history—Balaam's self; the honour of Balaam as a true prophet—therefore he will not lie; the wealth of Balaam—therefore the Israelites must be sacrificed. Nay more, even in this sublime vision his egotism breaks out. In the sight of God's Israel he cries, "Let me die the death of the righteous:" in anticipation of the glories of the Eternal Advent, "I shall behold Him, but not nigh." He sees the vision of a Kingdom, a Church, a chosen people, a triumph of righteousness. In such anticipations, the nobler prophets broke out into strains in which their own personality was forgotten. Moses, when he thought that God would destroy His people, prays in agony—"Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." Paul speaks in impassioned words—"I have continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." But Balaam's chief feeling seems to be, "How will all this advance me? And the magnificence of the prophecy is thus marred by a chord of melancholy and diseased egotism. Not for one moment—even in those moments when uninspired men gladly forget themselves; men who have devoted themselves to a monarchy, or dreamed of a republic in

sublime self-abnegation—can Balaam forget himself in God's cause.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) A church is not a load of bricks, remember: it is a house builded together. A church is not a bundle of cuttings in the gardener's hand: it is a vine, of which we are the branches. The true church is an organised whole; and life, true spiritual life, wherever it is paramount in the Church, without rules and rubrics, is quite sure to create order and arrangement. Order without life reminds us of the rows of graves in a cemetery, all numbered and entered in the register: order with life reminds us of the long lines of fruit trees in Italy, festooned with fruitful vines. Sunday-school teachers, bear ye the banner of the folded lamb; sick visitors, follow the ensign of the open hand; preachers, rally to the token of the uplifted brazen serpent; and all of you, according to your sacred calling, gather to the name of Jesus, armed for the war.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman's garden, acres in extent, and there are beds of flowers, the blue, and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria, and the geranium, and many others, all in order, and in ranks. Oh, how glorious this is! Those undulating

lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept, all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! a garden! who can tell how sweet this is! So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious Church is Christ's garden.

—*Ibid.*

(d) Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so doth the stream of infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die, for they are short-lived, an ephemeral generation. We have seen the Church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology, ethnology, and anatomy, and then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have issued, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the Church to-day are blown to the wind to-morrow; yea, the Church has been enriched by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been

strengthened, and her bulwarks consolidated.

—*Ibid.*

(e) As temporal and earthly governments become more secular, restricting their province to the physical well-being and the external relationships of mankind, there will be felt, amongst all who live a life intellectual and spiritual, the deeper need for the existence of a society and communion more truly corresponding to the higher and proper social nature of man than is possible in monarchies or republics, guilds or clubs. There is no danger of the world learning to do without the Church, or of the Church ceasing to exert a mighty influence over the world. The human rules and customs and creeds of the Churches may be modified; but the Church itself must remain: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Sooner shall the flames of love sink into the ashes of oblivion, and the stream of human thought pause in its eternal flow, than the Church of Christ shall cease to engage the warmest affections, to attract and employ the highest intelligence, and to enlist in her service and consecrate with her blessing the noblest energies of man.—*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verse 5.)

We had thought of going to the New Testament for a text, and taking one of Paul's splendid and comprehensive addresses; but we recollected how much more powerful the confessions of an adversary are than the testimony of a friend. Christianity has in every age gained more from the reluctant tributes of homage extorted from the lips of enemies than from the loftiest efforts of its friends. The admissions of infidels in favour of the happiness and security of a religious life, and the regrets of worldly and irreligious men, say more on behalf of the real value of the Gospel to perishing man than all the labours of divines and all the boasted learning of the schools.

Besides, we have another advantage in the text. The testimony of Balaam will weigh more with many men than that of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul. Paul gained great advantage with the philosophers of Athens by quoting their own authorities—"As certain also of your own poets have said." And here we address intelligent and worldly men in

the words of one of their own number—"As one of your own prophets hath said." Balaam was a man of unquestionable genius, whose convictions were in favour of religion, as yours may be; but his heart was against it. He was a lover of this present world; he was quite enchanted with the smiles and flatteries of royalty, and had an open heart and an oily palm to receive the base bribes which the world could bestow. He was quite bent upon rising in the world, determined that nothing should stop him; he had no small opinion of his own pretensions, his genius, his knowledge, his acquaintance with Divine things, of which, as a practised worldling, he knew the full marketable value; and is in fact quite eloquent in portraying his own exalted advantages,—“The man whose eyes are open hath said,” &c. Then he went as far as ever he could in opposing conscience—the voice of the Angel—the drawn sword—God. He was bent upon the thing from first to last: to curse he came; to curse he was

determined. When God forbade him to curse by his prophecies, he cursed by his counsels; and actually died in arms against the Church of God. Now, this is the man from whom you are to receive a lecture on the advantages of religion. Mark the blessedness of the righteous as it appears to the eye of worldly and irreligious men. In proof of this happiness we appeal—

I. To the reluctant testimony of the men of this world. They express—

1. *Their envy of the happiness of the righteous.* “Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel.” He came prepossessed against them; yet broke out in their favour,—“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,” &c. An acknowledgment that they have nothing to compare with the privileges of the people of God. They secretly bend to a religion of more comfortable promise.

2. *The utter futility of all opposition against the righteous.* “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

II. To the nature of the blessings which religion brings.

1. *The anxiety it relieves.* Doubt and uncertainty, fear and guilt; the disorder and restlessness of spirit.

2. *The blessings it reveals.* The counsels of Deity laid open; the scheme of redemption unveiled; pardon and peace; certainty of Divine favour; guidance of Divine providence, &c.

3. *The progressive advancement in holiness and devotion.* Moral triumphs over self, the world, and sin. They “shall be higher than Agag.”

4. *The exalted objects of hope it reveals.* “There shall come a Star,” &c.

III. To the actual experience of good men in every age. They have proved that religion gilds prosperity—soothes adversity—softens death, &c.

IV. To the avowed design of Divine dispensations.

This is to bless men. Acts iii. 25, 26.—*Samuel Thodey.*

BALAK'S ANGER AND BALAAM'S APOLOGY.

(Verses 10-14.)

I. The anger of Balak.

“And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together,” &c. See here—

1. *His bitter disappointment.* “Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.” All his efforts and hopes had ended in this. His distinguished embassies and tempting offers to the prophet, his numerous victims and repeated sacrifices to God, his earnest expectations of ultimately having the Israelites cursed, have issued in a triple declaration of their rich and exalted blessedness. Intense and deep was his mortification.

2. *His severe rebuke of Balaam.* “Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour,” &c. What a humiliation for a man of Balaam's genius and gifts and

“proud pretensions,” to be thus addressed! What a reversal of his cherished purposes and desires as to the issue of this enterprise! Yet, surely Balaam deserved this rebuke. He had pitifully humiliated himself long before Balak uttered his scornful and angry rebuke.

3. *His impious reflection against God.* “Lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.” In these words “the irony with which Balak scoffs at Balaam's confidence in Jehovah is unmistakable;” and their profanity is great.

II. The apology of Balaam.

1. *His vaunted honesty.* “And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sendest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me,” &c. This statement was true in the letter, but utterly false in spirit. Balaam's whole line of conduct was calculated to encourage in Balak the belief

that he would probably succeed in cursing Israel. Balaam's boast of his honesty implies a consciousness of his weakness, if not of his failure in that quality. "Brave men do not vaunt their courage, nor honourable men their honesty, nor do the truly noble boast of high birth. All who understand the human heart perceive a secret sense of weakness in these loud boasts of immaculate purity." (a)

2. *The impotence of man when opposed to God.* "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do good or bad of mine own mind." "He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it," Sennacherib would have destroyed Jerusalem, but the Lord said unto him, "I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou comest." Satan himself in his hostility against the people of God cannot go beyond the permission of God, as we see from Job i. 12; ii. 6. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

3. *The sovereignty of God.* Balak and Balaam could not frustrate His purposes. His supremacy is real and effectual. Quaintly and truly says Trapp, "God lets out the tedder to wicked men for a time, and then calls them back with shame enough to their task; lets them have the ball on the foot till they come almost to the goal, and then defeats them of their great hopes; as he did this sinful couple. Balak had not his will, nor Balaam his wages; God fooled them both, pulling the morsel out of their mouths, that they had well-nigh devoured." "The Lord reigneth."

Before Balaam takes his departure from Balak he declares unto him still further the blessedness of Israel and their relations in the future to neighbouring nations. "And now, behold, I go unto my people; come, I will advertise thee," &c. Some expositors are of opinion that this refers to the diabolical counsel of Balaam spoken of in chap. xxxi. 16; and Rev. ii. 14. We

reject this opinion for three reasons:—

(1) No such counsel is recorded or even further referred to here. (2) The statement of the prophet in this verse is directly opposed to this opinion. He advertises Balak what Israel would do to the Moabites, not what the Moabites should do to Israel. (3) The advertisement he is about to make to Balak points on to the distant future. The events were to take place "in the latter days," or "at the end of the days," an expression which cannot possibly apply to transactions which took place almost immediately afterward.

III. The lessons to be deduced from this part of the history.

1. *That human nature is deeply selfish.* The selfishness of Balaam has been conspicuous throughout; and now that of Balak is clearly revealed. Formerly, when he hoped to gain his ends by means of Balaam's powers, he was lavish in his courtesies and compliments to him; but now he sees that this hope was vain, he utters to him words of scornful and stinging rebuke. (b)

2. *That evil enterprises have painful issues.* This enterprise has brought to Balak loss, bitter disappointment, and sore annoyance; and to Balaam disappointment equally bitter, painful humiliation, and heavy guilt. God frustrates the designs of his enemies. Even when in the beginning evil courses seem pleasant and prosperous, the end thereof will be wretched and perhaps ruinous. "There is a way that seemeth right," &c. (Prov. xiv. 12). (c)

3. *That sin is utterly impolitic.* Balaam brought upon himself the scorn of Balak, guilt of conscience, and the anger of God, for "the wages of unrighteousness," which he failed to obtain. Sin is extreme folly. The sinner is the greatest fool. (d)

4. *That worldliness is utterly incompatible with obedience to God.* Balaam tried to harmonize them, and miserably failed in the attempt. He succeeded in neither his worldly nor his religious aims. He did not obtain "the rewards of divination;" he incurred the righteous anger of the Lord God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We observe here perfect veracity with utter want of truth. Balaam was veracious. He will not deceive Balak. And yet there was utter truthlessness of heart. Balaam will not utter what is not true; but he will blind himself so that he may not see the truth, and so speak a lie, believing it to be the truth. He will only speak the thing he feels; but he is not careful to feel all that is true. He goes to another place, where the whole truth may not force itself upon his mind—to a hill where he shall not see the whole of Israel: from hill to hill for the chance of getting to a place where the truth may disappear. But there stands the stubborn fact—Israel is blessed; and he will look at the fact in every way, to see if he cannot get it into a position where it shall be seen no longer. Ostrich like!

Such a character is not so uncommon as, perhaps, we think. There is many a lucrative business which involves misery and wrong to those who are employed in it. The man would be too benevolent to put the gold in his purse if he knew of the misery. But he takes care not to know. There is many a dishonourable thing done at an election, and the principal takes care not to inquire. Many an oppression is exercised on a tenantry, and the landlord receives his rent, and asks no questions. Or there is some situation which depends upon the holding of certain religious opinions, and the candidate has a suspicion that if he were to examine, he could not conscientiously profess these opinions, and perchance he takes care not to examine.

There are men who would not play false, and yet would wrongly win. There are men who would not lie, and yet who would bribe a poor man to support a cause which he believes in his soul to be false. There are men who would resent at the sword's point the charge of dishonour, who would yet for selfish gratification entice the weak into sin, and damn body and soul in hell. There are men who would be shocked at being called traitors, who in time of war will yet make a fortune by selling arms to their country's foes. There are men respectable and respected, who give liberally, and support religious societies, and go to church, and would not take God's name in vain, who have made wealth, in some trade of opium or spirits, out of the wreck of innumerable human lives. Balaam is one of the accursed spirits now, but he did no more than these are doing.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) Remember with yourself how gloriously Balaam was welcomed and entertained when he came, and lay it to these words now. Is not the case much altered? So ever was it, and ever will it be in this false world. Men have their drifts and ends, when they give grace and countenance to men; they shoot at a mark, which if they may hit by your means, you shall be a white son still, and all shall be well while you serve their purposes. But if

once you fail, and prefer conscience and honesty before their desire, truth before falsehood, and God before the devil; then hands be smitten together, the foot stamps, the brow frowns, the countenance and heart are changed. Great things were intended to us in favour and love, but now all is lost, we must fly to our place, and be packing. And who hath kept us from honour but God? The fault must be laid upon Him. This to many falleth out most unjustly; but here to Balaam it was due, whose heart was tainted with desire of wicked gain, and so lost both God and his gain. An example to worldly minds if God have any portion in them.—*Babington.*

Was there ever a man that was more moral and cultured than Lord Chesterfield? and was there ever a man that was more exquisitely selfish than he? Men whose tendencies incline them to the world, come to see that if they act from motives of economy, it is best for them to go through life with such and such graces and properties. They are persuaded that it is the most profitable way to go through life. On that ground they are moral; but that leaves out some of the essential elements of character. It is not conscience that controls them; it is not faith; it is not hope; it is not spiritual purity; it is not aspiration; it is not rectitude in any shape; it is only a refined form of selfishness. A man may be a thoroughly moral man outwardly, and a thoroughly immoral man inwardly.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) It is ill with thee, sinner, because thy joys all hang upon a thread. Let life's thread be cut, and where are thy merriments? Thy dainty music and thy costly cups, the mirth that flashes from thy wanton eye, and the jollity of thy thoughtless soul, where will these be when death, with bony hand, shall come and touch thy heart, and make it cease its beating? It is ill with you, because when these joys are over you have no more to come. You have one bright chapter in the story, but ah! the never-ending chapter, it is woe, woe, woe, from the beginning to the end: the woe of death, and after death the judgment, and after judgment the woe of condemnation, and then that woe that rolleth onward for ever—eternal woe, never coming to a pause, never knowing an alleviation.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles," said he, for his drunkenness made him see double; "I will blow out one;" and, as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God: so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down for ever.—*Ibid.*

BALAAM'S FOURTH PARABLE: THE STAR AND THE SCEPTRE OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 15-19.)

The introduction to this prophecy (vers. 15, 16) corresponds with that which the seer used before (vers. 3, 4), and which we have already noticed.

The predictions recorded in verses 17-19 were partially fulfilled in the reign of David (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; Psa. lx. 8). But it is historically certain that they were not fully accomplished in the reign of David or any of his successors. The Star that shall come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel, as Canon Liddon observes, "is something more than an anticipation of the reign of David: it manifestly points to the glory and power of a Higher Royalty." (a)

It appears to us quite certain that the prophecy applies to Christ and His Kingdom. It sets before us—

I. The glory of the Messiah as a King.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Attersoll thus interprets the symbol of the Star: "He is called by this name—First, because He is the fountain of all salvation and comfort; Secondly, to teach that all men by nature walk in darkness, and in the shadow of death; Thirdly, because He will give those that are His, the light of knowledge in this life, and the light of perfect glory in the life to come." We are not sure that the figure warrants all this. But our Lord spake of Himself as "The bright and morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16), and He is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures as the great Light for the moral darkness of the world (Luke i. 78, 79; ii. 32; John i. 4-9; viii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 19). (b)

But the principal idea seems to be the glory of Christ as the Sovereign of His people. He is, as M. Stuart (on Rev. xxii. 16) says, "a King all resplendent and glorious, like to the morning star (comp. 2 Sam. xxi. 17; Isa. xiv. 12; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. xii.

3). It is the splendour and beauty of the morning star which makes it here an object of comparison with the splendour of the King of Zion." His royal glory is not material, but moral. It consists in such things as these—

1. *The benevolence and sublimity of the objects for which He reigns.* He reigns to save and bless men, &c.

2. *The righteousness of His laws.* These are "holy and just and good."

3. *The wisdom of His methods.* He governs not by force or coercion, but by persuasion and inspiration.

4. *The character and privileges of His subjects.* They are upright and holy in character. They have the exalted privileges of sons of God here, and shall have eternal blessedness and glory hereafter. The glory of this King is set forth in language of splendid eloquence and power in Psa. lxxii.

II. The extent of the Messiah's conquests.

1. *He shall vanquish all His enemies.* "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of confusion; and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." "Edom and Moab are named by Balaam, as they are also by the prophets (cf., e.g., Isa. xi. 14), not for their own sake merely, but as representatives of the heathen nations (*goyeem*, cf. xxiv. 8), who were hostile to the theocracy. As Jacob then figures as a constant type of the Kingdom of Messiah in the prophets, so too do Edom and Moab of the enemies of that Kingdom; and in the threatened ruin of Edom and Moab is indicated the eventual destruction of all that resist the Kingdom of God in its power." But how will the King destroy the rebellious foes of His Kingdom? May we not reply, by transforming them into loyal subjects. An enemy is never so completely and gloriously destroyed as when he is converted into a true friend. But if any will not be vanquished by the kindness of the

King, they will be broken by His power. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron," &c. (Psa. ii. 8-12). (c)

2. *He shall take to Himself all the possessions of His vanquished enemies.* "And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies." All treasures and possessions shall surely be ultimately surrendered to Christ the King. The possessors of wealth and of power, the sons of science and the sons of song, the gifted and the beautiful, all will lay their treasures at His feet (comp. Psa. lxxii. 10, 11, 15).

III. The prosperity of the Messiah's subjects.

"And Israel shall do valiantly." "Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power." The Church of the living God, supported from on high, has bravely repelled the assaults of all its enemies, and has come forth from every conflict, not only victorious, but with increased courage and strength for future battles.

When Christ shall again appear, and every eye shall see Him, how shall we behold Him?—with joy as our Saviour and King?—or, how? (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Upon whom did the seer look when from the summit of Peor he beheld afar a mysterious personage, and gave as His heraldry the sceptre and the star? This can be none other than He who arose splendid in the midst of universal night—a night of ignorance; a night of guilt—as "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel;" this can be none other than He by whose coming the shadows of ceremonial institutions were dispersed, and who gave to the world the "means of grace and the hope of glory;" this can be none other than He whose setting was in blood, but that blood the purifier of a polluted earth, the purchase of such irradiations from the heaven which is above as shall finally deepen into a sky without a cloud, a day without a night; this can be none other than He who has been invested with all power in heaven and earth, who must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet, and whose dominion is to be established upon the wreck of all human sovereignty; and this is He—we know Him, though spoken of in parables, and shadowed by mystic imagery; He came out of Jacob, He rose out of Israel; for "to the Jews as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all, God blessed for ever." And if it were Christ's day upon which Abraham rejoicingly gazed when looking from the summit of Moriah down the long perspective of many generations, it was Christ's day which was beheld by Balaam, when from Peor's top he discerned, amid the mighty darkness of futurity, a single luminary, the harbinger of morning. If it were Christ of whom the dying Jacob foretold when he spoke of the sceptre departing from Judah, that Shiloh might appear; it was of Christ that Balaam pronounced when he predicted that out of the very people whose sovereignty was then to be destroyed, should arise a sceptre before which even Moab must bow; and Balaam might or might not be aware who the Being was of whom he said,

"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." But we who live in the dawning of that day for which prophets and righteous men longed—we who see advances already made towards the glorious consummation when Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords" shall reign triumphant over every nation and tribe and tongue,—we know the Personage whose bright emblazonry was shown to the seer on the vast gloom of future time, and we fall before the "one Mediator between God and man" as the "Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel."—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

(b) Are there reasons to be given why a star should be selected when the Saviour is to be figuratively described? We reply at once—that everything which has to do with light may be fitly taken as an image of Christ. There is nothing which so fitly represents the moral condition of the world when Christ appeared on earth, as darkness. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" and since Christ came to diffuse the knowledge of truth—in other words, to scatter this darkness—His office cannot be better represented than when he is exhibited under figures derived from the nature and the agency of light. But yet you may say, why describe Him as a star—a star which shines with comparatively faint lustre, and which does little towards radiating a benighted creation? Why not rather take the sun as His emblem—the sun which "cometh forth in his strength as a bridegroom from his chamber;" before which the shadows of the night immediately flee, and which pours lavishly its glorious radiance over earth, sea, and sky? Certainly it would seem at first sight, as though the sun were a more appropriate emblem of Christ than a star: and accordingly, whilst you may often hear Christians speaking of their Saviour as the "Sun of righteousness," you will hardly ever hear

them speak of Him as the bright and morning star. They have indeed scriptural warrant in calling Him the "Sun of righteousness," seeing that the words occur in the prophecy of Malachi, and evidently are used of the Redeemer. But this is the single passage in which the emblem of the Sun is employed; whilst that of the star is not of unfrequent occurrence. And if you examine attentively the passage in Malachi, you will find cause to think that it refers specially to a yet future time: for the prophet has just been speaking of that day of the Lord which seems in scripture to denote the second advent of Christ; and it is after describing the fearful desolation which that day will bring upon the wicked, that he is commissioned to say for the comfort of the godly—"But unto you that fear My name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." The title—"Sun of righteousness," as thus given to Christ, would appear to mark with how much fuller and more glorious manifestations the Saviour will show Himself upon His return to this earth, than are vouchsafed to us under the present dispensation. He will be a sun to His Church throughout the millennial and heavenly states; but He is only as a star till those states shall come. The night is yet upon us and around us, though that night may be far spent, and the day may be at hand. "We see only through a glass darkly," as we can "know but in part." Still it is no longer the starless night which it was ere the Redeemer brought life and immortality to light by His gospel. A Star—a morning Star has crossed the horizon, and a tempest-tossed world, in danger of everlasting shipwreck, may steer itself by the light of that Star to the haven where it would be, and where there is to be no more night, though no more sun. And thus, if an emblem is to be found which shall at one and the same time portray the Saviour as the source of moral illumination to the world, and yet show that this illumination is that of the dawn, rather than that of the noon-tide, such an emblem must be a star—a morning star, rather than that of the great luminary of the heavens. Christianity, as set up in the world, is but in its twilight; the night is still unbroken over a vast portion of our globe; and even where revelation has been received and rejoiced in, we must rather speak of streaks like those on the eastern sky, whose gold and purple prophecy of morning, rather than those rich full lustres which flood creation when the sun has reached the zenith. On every account, therefore—on account of what He is to the world, and on account of what (as yet, at least) He is not—is our Redeemer aptly figured by the emblem which He applied to Himself—the emblem of our text—the emblem of the bright and morning star.—*Ibid.*

(c) The sign of the Son of Man is yet to be seen in the heavens, where it was beheld by Balaam, from the summit of Peor. I know not what that sign shall be; perhaps again the star—fearful meteor!—like that which

hung over the fated Jerusalem, boding its destruction; perhaps again the sceptre—brilliant constellation!—burning with majesty and betokening the extinction of all meaner royalty; perhaps the Cross as it appeared to the Roman's eye, when he was taught to know the God of battles, and to place Christianity upon the throne of the Cæsars. But whatever the sign, the Being whose emblazonry it exhibits, shall come to deal out a long delayed vengeance on tribes that have refused to walk in His light and submit to His rule. "Associate yourselves, O ye people," saith Isaiah, "and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." Yes! Edom, and Moab, and Seir, and Sheth, literally the foes of Israel in earlier days, and figuratively those enemies of the Church who shall league for its overthrow at the time of the end—against you shall that Mighty One arise, whose type in the person of David trampled down the nations who first bore your names. And, therefore, do we feel that the future was indeed giving up its secrets to Balaam, as he stood upon Peor, with Israel encamped in the valley beneath. We place ourselves at his side. What seeth he? Dim and mystic things are coming up to his view; a lonely yet a splendid star is rising out of Jacob, and from Israel is proceeding a sceptre, but it looks not like that which a mortal king wields. What mean these hieroglyphics? Whose is this strange yet beautiful heraldry? The answer is easy. Yonder star is the image of Christ, the enlightener of the world; and yonder sceptre is His, for the whole world shall do Him homage. Yes, you say, but ere Christ can shine upon the nations and reign gloriously over them, there is to be battle, and tumult, and earthquake, and destruction. Prophecy is express on this, that there will be a great banding of the powers of earth against "the Lord and His Christ," and these powers must be beaten down ere the reign of righteousness can begin. Beholdest thou, O Seer, aught in the distance which seems to tell thee of foes met and overthrown by Him who hath for His sign the sceptre and the star? We pause for our answer, that we may be certified that it is indeed the Christ on whom the seer looks; and we feel that the prediction is complete when the prophet exclaims, "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies."—*Ibid.*

(d) It has been said by some commentators, that the words of our text have reference to his own final doom, as though Balaam was made aware that he should be banished from the presence of the Being whose coming he was commissioned to predict—"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." He shall be compelled to look on the Mediator; every eye shall see Him; but in place of being allowed to approach Him, he shall be amongst those who will be bidden to

depart. Oh! behold Him now by faith as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Then, when He shall come in power and great majesty, you shall behold Him, not at a distance, as a stranger, but nigh to you as a deliverer, an advocate, a friend. The

"Star" shall light up "the valley of the shadow of death;" the "Sceptre" shall be extended to you in token of favour and acceptance; though as with a rod of iron He breaks in pieces the hosts of the wicked.—*Ibid.*

CHRIST THE STAR SPOKEN OF BY BALAAM.

(Verses 15-17.)

It has pleased God on various occasions to make known His will to persons of a very unworthy character; and to show that His ways and thoughts are not regulated by the vain maxims of human wisdom. He proclaimed to Ahaz the conception of our Emmanuel in the womb of a virgin. To Nebuchadnezzar He revealed the successive destruction of the four great monarchies, and the erection of the Messiah's kingdom on the ruin of them all. Thus, in the passage before us, we are informed that He declared to Balaam not only His purposes respecting Israel and the nations that surrounded them, but the advent of that glorious Person, who, as a star should enlighten, and as a prince should govern, the whole world.

I. The introduction to the prophecy.

1. *It seems very strongly to characterize the person who delivered it.* When prophecies have been delivered by pious men, they have either been introduced with a plain declaration, "Thus saith the Lord;" or the prefatory observations have been calculated to exalt and glorify God. But Balaam's prediction is ushered in with a pompous exhibition of his own attainments, intended, as it should seem, to wrest from Balak that respect and honour which he had failed to procure by his preceding prophecies.

2. *It shows us how much knowledge we may possess, while yet we are utterly destitute of converting grace.* The most highly favoured of God's servants, from the beginning of the world, had not delivered a clearer prophecy of Christ than that which was uttered by Balaam on this occasion. Yet where shall we

find a baser character than Balaam's? Having considerable knowledge of the true God, he still continues to use enchantments as a *magician*. He was so *covetous* that he preferred "the wages of unrighteousness" to every consideration, either of duty to God or of love to man (2 Pet. ii. 15, 16). His *hypocrisy* was conspicuous from first to last; for in the midst of all his high professions of regard to the will and word of God, he laboured to the utmost to counteract the designs of God and to reverse His decrees. More *murderous* purposes never were entertained in the heart of man; for it was his most earnest desire to curse all the people of God, and to consign them over to destruction by the sword of their enemies. His last act especially was truly *diabolical*: when he found he could not prevail to destroy their bodies, he taught their enemies how to tempt them and to destroy their souls (Rev. ii. 14). After comparing his character with his professions and attainments in divine knowledge, what shall we say? Let us never value ourselves on any discoveries of divine truth, unless we have suitable affections and a correspondent practice (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3; Matt. vii. 22, 23).

II. The prophecy itself.

1. *In its primary sense it must be understood in reference to David.* The immediate intention of Balaam was to inform Balak what the Israelites should "do to his people in the latter days." Accordingly he declares that one, like a star for brightness, should arise from among the Jews at a distant period, to sway the Jewish sceptre, and to destroy

the Kingdoms of Edom and Moab. This was fulfilled in David (2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; Psa. lx. 8; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16).

2. *But there can be no doubt of its ultimately referring to Christ Himself.* He is called in Scripture "the Day-star," "the bright and morning star;" nor did ever any one arise with splendour comparable to His. He too sat upon the throne of His father David, and exercised unlimited dominion. The children of Edom and Moab may be justly considered as representing the enemies of His Church and People. These He subdues and will finally destroy. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." HIM then did Balaam see, as Abraham also had seen four hundred years before; but not, alas! with Abraham's joyful hope.

Improvement.

1. *Should not we then rejoice who have*

seen this prophecy accomplished? The star is risen, &c. We have only to yield ourselves up to Jesus, and we shall enjoy all the peace and glory of His Kingdom. Let us improve our privileges: let us pray that this "Day-star may arise in our hearts:" and let this Monarch so captivate our souls, as to lead us to a willing and unreserved obedience.

2. *Should we not be thankful too that we have One engaged to vanquish all our enemies?* This is the work and office of the Lord Jesus; nor will He ever fail in the execution of it. The Promised Land is before us, and in vain shall our enemies conspire against us. "Be strong and very courageous." Let the weakest rejoice in a confident expectation of victory; for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."—C. Simeon, M.A.

BALAAH'S FINAL PARABLES: NATIONAL REVOLUTIONS.

(Verses 20-24.)

These prophetic parables teach—

I. That national revolutions exhibit the instability of earthly greatness and temporal power.

See this in the destruction of the Amalekites, which was commenced under Saul and completed under Hezekiah (1 Sam. xv. ; xxvii. 8; xxx. 1-19; 1 Chron. iv. 43). The Kenites, too, though for a long time secure, were at length oppressed and carried into captivity by the Assyrians. Assyria and Eber also, descendants of Shem, were conquered by powers from the (to Balaam) unknown western regions. And finally these western powers "shall perish for ever." The greatest and mightiest empires of ancient days have passed away. All earthly things are transient. (a)

II. That national revolutions manifest the principles of Divine retribution.

In the revolutions predicted by Balaam we have clear and striking illus-

trations of the great truth that the *Divine retribution corresponds to human character and conduct.* The Amalekites were a warlike people; and by battles they were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Again, we see that empires obtained by conquest shall be lost by conquest. By force the Assyrian empire had chiefly been formed, and by force it passed away. We have another illustration of this retributive law in the history of the Kenites. They had been kind to Israel (Exod. xviii.); Moses had promised them that they should share in the goodness of God to Israel (chap. x. 32); Balaam here predicts for them long continued safety; and, as a matter of fact, they shared the fortunes of the Israelites until the captivity of the ten tribes. As v. Hofmann observes: "Kain, which had left its inaccessible mountain home in Horeb, enclosed as it was by the desert, to join a people who were only wandering in search of a home,

by that very act really placed its nest upon a still safer rock." They had aided Israel, and, in turn, they were aided by Israel. In the revolutions of history the kindnesses which have been shown to the cause and people of God are remembered and recompensed by Him. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Thus these historical revolutions teach us that, "With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again"; and, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," &c. (b)

III. That national revolutions are ordered by God.

"God doeth this" (ver. 23). "Whoever are the instruments, He is the supreme director." "The Lord bringeth

low, and lifteth up," &c. (1 Sam. ii. 7, 8). "That bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown," &c. (Ezek. xxi. 26, 27). (c)

Learn—

1. *The great duty and interest of nations to seek for and to embody truth and righteousness in their governments, institutions, &c.* Prov. xiv. 34; xxv. 5; xxix. 14; Isa. lx. 12.

2. *The duty and interest of all men to set their "affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* The latter are mutable and transient, the former are immutable and permanent. Truth, holiness, love, are abiding things; seek after these. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Earthly inheritances are but of brief continuance. The possession of them is limited and uncertain. To every one, they are but at most for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain answered to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal: "If that had been," said he, "I should never have reigned."—*Leighton*.

All earthly things last and endure but for a season; men are mortal, riches are uncertain, favour is vanity, honour is changeable, treasures are transitory, pleasures are unstable, profits are corruptible, friends are fading, and oftentimes turn to be enemies: only the treasures of heaven, the favour of God, the pleasures of eternal glory, the riches of the world to come, are immortal, and never decay.—*Attersoll*.

(b) God's rewards and God's punishments are all natural. Distinguish between arbitrary and natural. Death is an arbitrary punishment for forgery: it might be changed for transportation. It is not naturally connected. It depends upon the will of the law-maker. But trembling nerves are the direct and natural results of intemperance. They are in the order of nature the results of wrong-doing. The man reaps *what* he has sown. Similarly in rewards. If God gave riches in return for humbleness, that would be an arbitrary connection. He did give such a reward to Solomon. But when He gives Life Eternal, meaning by Life Eternal not duration of existence, but heavenly quality of existence, it is all natural. The seed sown in the ground contains in itself the future harvest. The harvest is but the development

of the germ of life in the seed. A holy act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap." He that sows much, thereby becomes more conformed to God than he was before—in heart and spirit. That is his reward and harvest. And just as among the apostles, there was one whose spirit, attuned to love, made him emphatically the disciple whom Jesus loved, so shall there be some who, by previous discipline of the Holy Ghost, shall have more of His mind, and understand more of His love, and drink deeper of His joy than others. They that have sowed bountifully.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 89.

(c) God increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. We see only the intermediate agents, we are prone to forget that God is the Creator and Controller as well of the moral as of physical volcanoes, and, consequently, are led to imagine, in the day of panic, that sovereignty is engulfed in confusion, and that the garments of battle are the shroud of government. It is thus that the devoutest of us may not unfrequently alarm ourselves into temporary Atheism, and hasten for refuge to the mud-fortresses of mechanical power, when we should fly straight to the pavilion of God. "The Lord reigneth," &c. His throne is established of old: He is from everlasting. Kings are His servants, princes are His menials, the universe in His footstool, and heaven itself but a flash of His benignant eye.

We shall have but a shallow knowledge of history if we study it merely in the faint light reflected by victorious thrones, or by the troubled glare of oft-recurring battles. God is the central fact in all history. Growing nations are but his expanding smile, dwindling empires are but His darkening frown. Nebuchadnezzar was only the menial servant of the Most High when he built the "great Babylon" which he idolized, and all the conquerors of proud Chaldea, from Cyrus to Tamerlane, were the hirelings of the Infinite King. The Ptolemies and the Pharaohs of Egypt held their lease of power from the Most High: and the pompous march of the Cæsars was but as the dance of the ephemera over the summer stream. "He bringeth the princes to nothing," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). Can it be right, or wise, to ignore *His* existence when we open the archives of history? Can he have a true conception of the magnitude and grandeur of the landscape who has examined it only by the feeble glimmer of a wasting

rushlight? Foolish man! Even an atom would not reveal its beauties in such a mocking light; how much less, then, the mountain, wood, and stream of nature's palaces. No, no! The *sun* must reveal it. And so with *history*: let the Sun of heaven blaze upon it, and every pinnacle becomes a glorified purpose—every want kindles into sublime significance.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(*d*) Oh, that I could pour in upon the young the majesty and sanctity of living for the invisible; that is to say, for honour, and truth, and fidelity! Oh, that I could make you feel how essentially brittle, how friable, how perishable, are all material sources of strength! God is the centre of life, and spiritual realities are the only things that will endure. Stone and iron, and silver and gold, and timber, and cities, and nations, and outward things, are but pictures, painted soon to fade away; while truth and love, and fidelity, and purity, shall last for ever and for ever.—*H. W. Beecher.*

DEATH, THE CROWN OF LIFE.

(Verse 23.)

"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

Our text may be considered either as a plaint, a sigh, or a song—a dirge winding to a march. There are, in reality, three questions interlinked in this passage. It is a question of studious curiosity. What kind of a race will then inhabit the earth! Men are naturally inquisitive to know who are to be their successors. Why not? They are to be the heirs in turn of our heritage; the tenants who are to move in as we move out; to enjoy our repairs, and to do, in turn, their own repairing, for those who shall follow them.

Who are they? The question deepens into a sigh. Here we go! just as we begin to take in the meaning of things about us; scarce sooner found than lost. Death! what is it? It must be a mystery full of meaning. It seems as natural as to be born. Has Heaven hid the happiness of death, that man may dare to live? And what is life? It is not so much one grand event as a conjunction of grand events. All are more or less alive to the activities that surround them. All are more or less

sensitive to the links that unite us to coming time.

The future is full of suggestion. The poet loves to forecast it for its own sake, and fill the atmosphere with sunshine, or with shade, as suits his fancy best. The poet is an artist too. He paints for us the landscape of the future, and interprets to our strange surprise the distant scenes embodied there. The philosopher listens eagerly for hints that shall confirm his airy schemes and idle speculations. The statesman is zealously intent on discovering the wedge that shall cleave the knots of craggy policies. The saint is anxious to learn of God and Heaven, and solve the awful mystery of our being.

But what of that which is to transpire long after all these are past? What will go on here when I am gone? Some one will tread the path that I am treading! Some one will saunter in the grove where I now linger! . . . Some one will cry out with unutterable longing, as *we* now cry, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

We are baffled at the grave. We put our eyes close to the bars, but we

cannot see. Death is the crown of life; and yet it is not the triumph of man over time, but of time over man. . . . Do lasting slumbers hold us? Is there no more of us when we are gone? Oh! the melancholy ring of those words—"When I am gone!" I admit it is a solemn thing to die. It is a dread passage; and what may happen after it? There is an eternity to this side the grave; the world shall be moving on when I am gone—and shall I then be put out for ever? The emphasis is on this wise—this world *as it is to be*. Where are those who, in the times past, have been dreaming of rapid propulsion as they plodded slowly on? Where are those whose genius had almost wrested from nature the longed-for secret, but died without the sight? Know they now of swift-going ships and dashing railway trains that traverse mountain and valley like things of life? Where are those who dreamed of messages borne on the wings of the wind? Do they read the swift-flying signals from telegraph wires, leaving the winds lagging languidly behind? Verily, what hath God wrought! Yet these are but the meagre preliminaries to what *shall be*. When the reduplicated forces of the earth shall be put under command; when man shall sit in plumed victory over the opposing energies of nature; when the sword shall be beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; when health shall mantle the cheek, and happiness shall festoon the fireside; when man shall keep faith with his fellow-man, and worship and adore his Maker. "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" Shall I live then? The thought gladdens, but it maddens as well. The scepticism that would console me with the thought that death is but a momentary pang; that I shall sleep in death's dateless night; that all these struggles shall have come to their rest; ah! this scepticism is but a miserable comforter after all. I cry out and complain with all the sadness of my rational nature. I am full of longing to know when this world shall have

been finished; then, where shall I be?

When geology shall cease to tamper with the rock; when disease shall be no longer necessary; when Death shall lie on his death-bed; "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" The Great Omnipotent does not weary. Every age becomes impatient; but His doings, as well as His revelation, assure us that with Him "a thousand years are as one day." . . . When we have fought our brave round, the Great Captain will order us to the rear and bring up fresh recruits. But what of the battle? Shall we know nothing of its sequel? "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" It is a question of sublime importance to us.

It is voiced in another shape—"If a man die, shall he live again?" God has provided a way by which His people may be released, and yet view this earth in all its perfect beauty and glory. The resurrection solves this mighty problem. All who labour shall see the reward of their labour. Every husbandman whose time is due to toil shall be gladdened by the sight of the harvest. The sower shall be partaker of the fruit. "I heard a voice from heaven," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13). God works in the shadow of time. Even while we sleep he toils on; His agencies are ever on the alert.

Presently time shall have halted from its confused scramble, and God's finished workmanship shall have been taken from the loom, and the tapestry shall be revealed in all its beauty and perfectibility—the pattern will be complete. Then shall we learn that when we die we do not die out; that death is not death; that to die is not to die, but to blossom into life. We say good night to earth, but not good-bye. And all this we shall know when sin has perished; when death is dead; when tears are dried; when earth is immortal—we may then be alive, and never die again. Blessed reality close at hand! Shall we, *every one*, live when God doeth this?—H. S. Carpenter, D.D. (Abridged from *The Christian World Pulpit*.)

THE PARTING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verse 25.)

Instead of "Balaam returned to his place," it is better to translate, "turned towards his place." "That he really returned home is not implied in the words themselves; and the question, whether he did so, must be determined from other circumstances. In the further course of the history, we learn that Balaam went to the Midianites, and advised them to seduce the Israelites to unfaithfulness to Jehovah, by tempting them to join in the worship of Peor (chap. xxxi. 16). He was still with them at the time when the Israelites engaged in the war of vengeance against that people, and was slain by the Israelites along with the five princes of Midian (chap. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22). At the time when he fell into the hands of the Israelites, he no doubt made a full communication to the Israelitish general, or to Phinehas, who accompanied the army as priest, concerning his blessings and prophecies, probably in the hope of saving his life, though he failed to accomplish his end." Such is the opinion of Keil and Del. Hengstenberg, however, suggests "that after Balaam's departure from Balak, he took his way into the camp of the Israelites, and there made known his prophecies to Moses, or to the elders of Israel, in the hope of obtaining from them the reward which Balak had withheld, and that it was not till after his failure to obtain full satisfaction to his ambition and covetousness here that he went to the Midianites, to avenge himself upon the Israelites, by the proposals that he made to them."

I. Balaam and Balak parted, having utterly failed in their designs.

Balak had not obtained what he desired. His repeated sacrifices to Jehovah, his tempting offers of large rewards and splendid honours to Balaam, and all his other efforts, had proved fruitless and vain: Israel was not cursed but repeatedly and richly

blessed. Balaam, too, had not obtained what he so eagerly longed for. He had found himself utterly unable to curse the chosen people, and had not gained "the rewards of divination." The coveted wealth and honours, for which he had risked and dared so much, he had not secured. The prophet and the king were both bitterly disappointed and vexed; and during all their plottings and endeavours to curse them, the Israelites were peacefully and securely encamped in the neighbouring plains.

Learn: *the devices and deeds of the wicked against the cause and people of God are ever foiled by Him.* He that keepeth Israel can neither be surprised, nor circumvented, nor overpowered (Psa. cxxx.). (a)

II. They parted with characters considerably modified by their association with each other.

The solicitations and temptations of Balak had influenced the character of Balaam; and the character and conduct of Balaam had exercised no slight influence upon Balak. What was the result of these influences? We know that the character of Balaam had sadly deteriorated since the first embassy from Balak had visited him; he had also incurred the wrath of God by reason of his sins; and he went forward to deeper and more diabolical wickedness, and to a doom of appalling darkness. And it is impossible to conclude that Balak was not injured by the influence of Balaam. His heinous designs had been encouraged, his hopes allowed and then blighted, and his temper irritated and embittered by the seer. They had mutually influenced each other for evil; they parted worse men than they were when first they met.

Learn: *that in our associations with our fellowmen we are ever exerting a most important influence upon their character and destiny.* We meet and part; but in our intercourse we have contributed

something to the development of each other's character either for good or for evil. We shall never be the same beings as we should have been if we had never met. (b)

III. They parted, but not for ever.

Balaam and Balak will meet again. They will both see Him of whom Balaam prophesied, "They shall see Him, but not now: they shall behold Him, but not nigh." "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." Then, if not before, these two who

parted upon Peor will meet again; and then each of them will receive the just retribution of his character and conduct.

Learn.—That *those who have been associated in this present life will meet again in the great hereafter.* Tempter and tempted, oppressor and oppressed, companions in evil designs and deeds, and companions in noble aims and enterprises, all will meet again.

Let the thought of that future meeting have its due weight in regulating our present associations. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Sooner would God forget some planets that He had hurled into the firmament than forget the feeblest of His saints. "Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me." "The very hairs of your head are numbered." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." God has pledged His power on our behalf. He has sworn by His existence that we are dear to Him through the infinite merits of His Son. Who shall tell the limits of our security? If God keeps all worlds in motion—if the eyes of the universe are directed to Him for help—if all things are under His benignant control, we may content ourselves in the plenitude of our safety. Say not, brother, that thy solitude is hidden from God, or that in the time of affliction He will forget thee; perish the thought! The mother may forget her sucking child; but God will hold thee in everlasting remembrance; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in His people" (Psa. cxlix. 4). God looks at the individual, not at the aggregate. The Christian cannot be lost in the world's crowd. The Koh-i-noor may be taken for a piece of valueless glass, but the Christian gem cannot be mistaken of God. They who love God shall be accounted jewels in "that day." Each is a part of the whole, and unity must be perfected in heaven.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) No human being can come into this world without increasing or diminishing the sum total of human happiness, not only of the present, but of every subsequent age of humanity. No one can detach himself from this connection. There is no sequestered spot in the universe, no dark niche along the disk of non-existence, to which he can retreat from his relations to others, where he can withdraw the influence of his existence upon the moral destiny of the world. Everywhere his presence or absence will be felt. "Everywhere he will have companions, who will be better or worse for his influence."

It is an old saying, and one of fearful and fathomless import, that we are here forming

characters for eternity. Forming characters!—whose? our own? or others? Both; and in that momentous fact lie the peril and responsibility of our existence. Who is sufficient for the thought! thousands of my fellow-beings will yearly, and till years shall end, enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had I never lived. The sunlight of that world will reveal my finger-marks in their *primary formations*, and in all their successive strata of thought and life. And they too will form other characters for eternity, until the influence of my existence shall be diffused through all the future generations of this world, and through all that shall be future to a certain point in the world to come. As the little silvery, circular ripple, set in motion by the falling pebble, expands from its inch of radius to the whole compass of the pool; so there is not a child, not an infant Moses placed, however softly, in his bulrush ark upon the sea of time, whose existence does not stir a ripple, gyrating outwards and on, until it shall have moved across and spanned the whole ocean of God's eternity, stirring even the river of life, and the fountains at which His tall angels drink.—*Elihu Burritt.*

(c) It is said that among the high Alps at certain seasons the traveller is told to proceed very quietly, for on the steep slopes overhead the snow hangs so evenly balanced that the sound of a voice or the report of a gun may destroy the equilibrium, and bring down an immense avalanche, that will overwhelm everything in ruin in its downward course. And so about our way there may be a soul in the very crisis of its moral history, trembling between life and death, and a mere touch or shadow may determine its destiny. A young lady who was deeply impressed with the truth, and was ready, under a conviction of sin, to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" had all her solemn impressions dissipated by the unseemly jesting and laughter of a member of the Church by her side as she passed out of the sanctuary. Her irreverent and

worldly spirit cast a shadow on that young lady "not far from the kingdom of God." How important that we should always and everywhere walk worthy of our high calling as Christians! Let us remember that we are always casting the shadow of our real life upon some one; that somebody is following us as John followed Peter into the sepulchre.

Happy if, when all the influences of life flow back and meet at the judgment, we can lift up clean hands and spotless robes, and say, "I am free from the blood of all men!" Happy then, to hear even one soul saying to us out of the great multitude, that, following the shadow of our Christian life and devotion, he found Jesus and heaven.—*Dr. Storr.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Shittim*. An abbreviation of Abel-Shittim, "the meadow of the acacias." It was situated in the plains of Moab, at the northern extremity of the camp of Israel.

Verse 2. *And they called, &c.*; "i.e., 'the daughters of Moab called': the verb, and the ensuing 'their,' being in Hebrew, feminine."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. *Baal-Peor* is the Baal of Peor, who was worshipped in the city of Beth-Peor (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46; chap. xxiii. 28), a Moabitish *Priapus*, in honour of whom women and virgins prostituted themselves. As the god of war, he was called *Chemosh* (chap. xxi. 29). *Keil* and *Del.*

Verse 4. *Take all the heads, &c., i.e., Assemble them together.*

Hang them. The "them" does not refer to "the heads of the people," but to the guilty persons: these were to be first put to death (verse 5), and then, as an aggravation of their punishment, and as a warning to others, they were to be publicly hung up, which was done by impaling the body upon a stake or fastening it upon a cross.

The fierce anger of the Lord was manifested in the plague with which he visited the camp of Israel (verse 9).

Verse 6. *One of the children of Israel, &c.* This was Zimri (verse 14).

A Midianitish woman,—"Cozbi, the daughter of Zur" (verse 15, and chap. xxxi. 8).

Weeping, &c. On account of the

wrath of God which had smitten the camp with the plague.

Verse 8. *The tent*, תֵּכָה, not the ordinary tent. The word is only found here in the Hebrew Scriptures; it signifies arched or dome-shaped. From the Hebrew word, through the Arabic, the Spaniards derive their *alcova*, and we our *alcove*. Here the word denotes, the inner division of the tent, which was used as the sleeping room and apartment for the women in the larger tents of the upper classes.

Verse 9. *Twenty and four thousand.* In 1 Cor. x. 8, St. Paul gives the number as "three and twenty thousand." In this he probably follows a tradition of the scribes, according to which, of the twenty-four thousand mentioned here, one thousand were put to death by the judges, leaving twenty-three thousand as the number of those who fell victims to the plague.

Verse 11. *Zealous for My sake.* Rather, as in the margin, "Zealous with My zeal."

Verse 13. *Made an atonement.* The vengeance inflicted by Phinehas upon two of the most flagrant offenders was accepted by God as a propitiation (lit., a covering) for the sin of the people.

Verse 17. *Vex the Midianites.* The Midianitish women seem to have been most active in tempting the Israelites. Moreover their wickedness "culminated in the shameless wantonness of Cozbi, the Midianitish princess."

THE SIN OF ISRAEL AT SHITTIM, AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

(Verses 1-5, 9.)

Consider—

I. The sin of the Israelites at Shittim.

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people," &c. (vers. 1-3).

1. *The sin itself.* Many of the people accepted the invitation of the daughters of Moab and Midian to a sacrificial festival, and then engaged in the worship of Baal-peor, which was associated with, and partly consisted in, the most licentious rites. Their sin was two-fold: (1) Spiritual fornication, or idolatry (Hos. ii.). (2) Physical fornication.

2. *The origin of their sin.* The counsel of Balaam was the accursed root from whence it sprang (chap. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14). Having found himself utterly powerless to curse them as a prophet or a magician, with hellish cunning he advised that others should seduce them to curse themselves by their sins (a)

3. *The instruments of their sin.* The daughters of Moab (ver. 2), and the daughters of Midian (vers. 17, 18), were employed to tempt the Israelites. The Moabites and Midianites could not have vanquished the Israelites by the sword, but they speedily overcame them by the fascinations of their daughters.

4. *The occasion of their sin.* Two circumstances seem to us to have contributed to the success of the temptation. (1) Their abode at Shittim. They were in the neighbourhood of sinful associations and corrupting influences. "Near a fire, a serpent, and a wicked woman, no man can long be in safety." (b) (2) Their lack of occupation. The Israelites were comparatively unemployed. Idleness leads to vice and mischief. (c)

II. The judgment of God upon the Israelites on account of their sin.

1. *The judgment inflicted immediately by God.* "Those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand." "They joined themselves unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with

their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them" (Psa. cvi. 28, 29). As a punishment for their sin, the Lord sent among them this terrible pestilence. In some form or other, punishment ever follows close upon the heels of sin.

2. *The judgment inflicted by Moses and the judges, by the command of God.* "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people," &c. (vers. 4, 5). Concerning this punishment notice—(1) Its nature—death. "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-Peor." (2) Its publicity. "Hang them up before the Lord against the sun." After death their bodies were to be made a public spectacle—a warning to others by indicating the evil of the sin and the severity of the wrath of God against the sinners. (3) Its executioners. These are called "the heads of the people" (ver. 4), and "the judges of Israel" (ver. 5, and Exod. xviii. 25, 26). It was their duty to maintain law and order, and to punish wicked doers, each one in his own jurisdiction (comp. Rom. xiii. 1-4).

III. The lessons which we should learn from this portion of Israel's history.

1. *The secret of the security of the people of God.* While Israel was faithful to Jehovah their God, they were perfectly safe. Neither the subtlety nor the strength of their enemies, neither earth nor hell, could hurt them, while they were true to their covenant with Him. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good." Their sins deprived them of the Divine protection, and brought down upon them the Divine anger. "None can prevail against the servants of God, except by tempting them to sin." "By our own sins we are overcome." Faith in God is the great condition of our strength and safety. Cleaving to Him by faith, we are inviolably secure.

2. *The danger of those temptations which appeal to our self-indulgence or love of pleasure.* In most cases ease and pleasure are more perilous to the spiritual life than toil and pain. The pleasures of sense are very prone to grow into the pleasures of sin. Many have been "allured through the lusts of the flesh" into the most grievous sins. (d)

3. *The terribleness of the Divine anger.* Calm, righteous, constant, and intense is the wrath of God against sin. Let no one deceive himself or dishonour God by imagining that, like some weak-natured man, He is too kind and indulgent to His creatures to be angry

with them. With implacable hatred He hates sin. "The wrath of the Lamb" is unspeakably, inconceivably, terrible. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with his stroke," &c. (e)

4. *The solicitude with which we should guard against arousing this anger towards us.* Sin calls it forth, therefore shun sin.

5. *The earnestness with which we should seek the mercy and the protection of God.* We need His mercy for the forgiveness of sins in the past, and His protection to keep us from sin in the future. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Among the people who knew and discussed the events which befell the Israelites since their migration from Egypt, it must have been notorious that there had been signal punishments inflicted upon them for breaches of fealty to their King. Pondering this in his mind, the infernal sagacity of Balaam led him to conclude, that if they could but be seduced from their allegiance to their Divine King, the protection which rendered them invincible would be withdrawn, and they would be easily subdued by their enemies. This discovery he made known to the King of Moab before his departure, and it illustrates the character of the man, that he could form this device, and counsel the King to act upon it, just after his mouth had poured forth, even by constraint, eloquent blessings upon the people whose ruin he now devises. And all this was purely gratuitous; for his business with Moab was ended. He could not curse Israel; and he had incurred the anger, rather than secured the honours, of the King of Moab. He seems to have retired among the neighbouring people of Midian, close allies with Moab, until he should behold the results of the course which he had thus suggested, and in which he seems to have induced the Midianites to co-operate. However dissatisfied with the result of their sending for him, the Moabites were still too deeply impressed with the notion of his superhuman sagacity not to pay the most heedful attention to his advice. This was in effect that the women should be rendered instrumental in seducing the Israelites to take part in the obscene rites of Baal-Peor.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) As the Hebrews lay encamped in the plains of Moab, unsuspecting of the bad feeling of the Moabites and Midianites towards them, an intercourse gradually, and seemingly in due course, sprang up between the kindred

nations. The daughters of Moab and Midian came to visit the women of Israel, and thus fell under the notice of the men. The men of Israel, also, new to a peopled country, and strange to a friendly intercourse with strangers, amused themselves and gratified their curiosity by visiting the towns and villages in the vicinity. This intercourse was perilous for them. Dazzled and bewildered by magnificent and seductive appliances of vice, to which in their simple wandering life they had been all unused, although their fathers had seen the like things in Egypt, they were prevailed upon by the idolators of Moab and Midian to take part in the riotous and lustful orgies of their gods. It does not appear to us that they meant to abjure their faith in Jehovah, or so much as adopted a belief in Baal-Peor along with it. What they did was to participate in the licentious acts by which his votaries professed to honour him.—*Ibid.*

Albeit we cannot at all times forsake the familiarity of the unfaithful, yet we must ever abandon and abjure their unfaithfulness and ungodliness: we cannot ever refuse their company, but we must evermore renounce their impiety. Let us take heed that we embrace none of their sins. He that standeth farthest from a raging flame, is freest and farthest off from burning; he that walketh a great distance from the bank of the river, is safest from drowning. He that cometh not near places of infection, is surest to escape the danger. And as we are to beware of all their sins, so especially it behoveth us to be suspicious and fearful of those sins, unto which we know ourselves most prone and inclined. For they do most of all delight us, and those are they which will soonest overturn us, and bring upon us destruction of soul and body.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) And was idleness think you nothing?

Yes, yes, assure yourself, it is ever a chief agent in this business. Had our first mother been busy, she had not tattled with the serpent; and had they not been idle in Sodom, they had never fallen to that abomination; for idleness is mentioned as a means by the prophet (Ezek. xvi. 49). Take idleness away, and Cupid's bow casts the string: he will never do harm with all his arrows. Dost thou ask the question, how *Ægistus* became an adulterer? He was idle. David was idle on the top of the palace; and what followed? These Israelites are idle, and idle they tattle, and tattling they are invited to their sacrifice, invited, they go, and both spiritually and corporally they commit whoredom. A fearful fall in men so taught. But this is man's weakness and woman's strength.—*Babington*.

(d) Pleasures are of two sorts: some are simply unlawful, and not to be used at all, being directly contrary to the Word of God: such are the pleasures that carnal men take in eating till they surfeit, and in drinking till they are drunken; such are the pleasures that whoremongers take in adultery, fornication, and uncleanness. Others are of themselves indifferent, and in their own nature neither good nor evil, but according as they are used, as hunting, hawking, and other lawful recreations; and even these when they take up all our thoughts, and thrust better things out of

the doors, are called thorns in the parable of the sower, as well as unlawful pleasures (Luke viii. 14). There is nothing doth so much choke the Word of God as the pleasures of the flesh; nothing causeth us so soon to forget it; nothing maketh us so soon weary and loath to hear it, as the desire to follow and pursue after our delights; so that it standeth us upon to cut them up, and pull them out of the ground of our hearts. . . . We see many by experience, who in the days of tribulation have not given over their hold, but endured slanders, revilings, imprisonment, hunger, and thirst in a necessitous estate; yet have been overcome with peace, drowned with sensuality, and lulled asleep in carnal security. . . . Whilst David wandered in the wilderness, was hunted out of holes by Saul, into which he was glad to escape to hide himself, and was trained up in the school of afflictions, he comforted himself in the Lord his God, he made Him his rock and refuge, he asked counsel of Him and followed His direction; but when he had rest from enemies, safety from dangers, deliverance from troubles, comfort from sorrows, and freedom from afflictions, he fell into horrible sins, both in the matter of Uriah, and in numbering of the people.—*Attersoll*.

(e) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 220, 221.

THE FLAGRANT WICKEDNESS OF ZIMRI, AND THE FERVENT ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verses 6-15.)

Notice—

I. The flagrant wickedness of Zimri.

"And, behold, one of the children of Israel came," &c. (ver. 6).

1. *The heinousness of his sin.* Fornication in any one is a great and grievous sin, but in one of the chosen people its enormity is far greater than in others. They had a clearer revelation of God's will; they enjoyed superior privileges; they were called to a higher and purer moral life than their heathen neighbours; hence fornication in them was far more heinous than in their neighbours (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 15-20).

2. *The aggravations of his sin.* His guilt was aggravated by—(1) The position which he occupied. "The name of the Israelite that was slain with the Midianitish woman was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites." It was

incumbent upon him to set an example of order and purity and loyalty to Jehovah. His partner in guilt, too, was a princess. Her name was "Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian" (comp. chap. xxxi. 8). (2) The effrontery with which he sinned. Not content with sinning amongst the Midianites, he brought the woman into the camp of Israel, which Jehovah had commanded to be kept pure (chap. v. 1-3). And this he did "in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel." An utter absence of shame marked his vile conduct; he seems rather to parade than to hide his wickedness. (3) The daring and defiant character of his sin. The wrath of God had gone forth and was smiting the people with the deadly pestilence: by his conduct he bids it defiance. The

judges had been commanded to put to death the sinners: by his action he dares them to deal with him. He sinned presumptuously—"with a high hand" (comp. chap. xv. 30, 31). (a)

3. *The infamy of the sinners.* "Now the name of the Israelite that was slain," &c. (vers. 14, 15). Thus the names, the families, and the rank of the evil-doers are perpetuated. An immortality of infamy is theirs.

II. The fervent zeal of Phinehas.

"And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 7, 8).

1. *Its character.* "He was zealous with My zeal" (ver. 11); "he was zealous for his God" (ver. 13). "He abhorred the presumptuous wickedness of Zimri, as God abhorred it." He was filled with holy indignation against one who so flagrantly sinned and so greatly dishonoured God. His holy zeal burned to arrest the progress of the sin, and to vindicate the honour of Jehovah. (b)

2. *Its expression.* On seeing the conduct of Zimri, he promptly seized a spear, and following the guilty pair into the inner apartment of the tent, he "thrust both of them through." The authority of Phinehas to execute summary vengeance on Zimri and Cozbi has been challenged. The case presents itself to us thus: the outrageous sin of Zimri imperatively demanded stern and immediate punishment; and the nature of that punishment was already declared (ver. 5). But they who should have inflicted it seem to have been sorrow-stricken, and made no attempt to deal with the offenders. Tears of grief and shame were natural; but surely at such a time stern and decisive action was the great need. The indulgence of sorrow should have been firmly repressed until the judgment of God had been executed. With rare discernment Phinehas perceived the treatment which should be dealt out to those atrocious sinners, and with zeal and courage equally rare he at once applied that treatment. The case was of exceptional flagrancy and enormity, and demanded exceptional treatment,

and Phinehas administered that treatment. The "deed was its own justification. Its merit consisted in the evidence it gave that his heart was right before God. He risked his own life by dealing according to their deserts with two influential and defiant evil-doers." (c) If his conduct needed apology we may well give it in the words of Bishop Hall: "God pardoneth the errors of our fervency, rather than the indifferences of our lukewarmness." Moreover this act of Phinehas cannot without extreme unfairness be said to afford any countenance to "acts of private revenge, of religious persecution, or even of irregular public vengeance." (d)

3. *Its effect.* "So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel Phinehas hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel; and made an atonement for the children of Israel." The act of Phinehas was accepted by God as a national "atonement," "covering," or "propitiation." By this act he publicly manifested—(1) a right estimate of the sin; (2) right feelings in relation to it; (3) right action in relation to it—he endeavoured to make an end of it. It appears to us probable that it was because of these qualities in the action of Phinehas that God accepted it as "an atonement for the children of Israel." The due administration of justice by magistrates and judges tends to prevent the judgments of God. If they are lax in dealing with vice and crime, God will sternly deal with them Himself.

4. *Its reward.* For this zealous action Phinehas was—(1) Divinely commended. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 10, 11, and Psa. cvi. 30, 31). (2) Divinely rewarded. "Behold, I give unto Him My covenant of peace," &c. (vers. 12, 13). The covenant bestowed upon Phinehas was the confirmation to him and his posterity after him of the possession of the priesthood. "In accordance with this promise, the high-priesthood which passed from Eleazar to Phinehas (Judges xx. 28) continued in his family, with the

exception of a brief interruption in Eli's days, until the time of the last gradual dissolution of the Jewish state through the tyranny of Herod and his successors." Thus for his zealous action Phinehas was himself rewarded, and his posterity was blessed for his sake.

"Brave works for God win crowns.

There is no merit in them. But the grace, which gives the will, and nerves the arm, and brings success, awards a recompense. Among earth's happiest sons and heaven's most shining saints, devoted labourers hold foremost place."

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 280, 281.

(b) Zeal may be defined as the heat or fervour of the mind, by which its vehemence of indignation goes out against anything which it conceives to be evil, and its vehemence of desire towards anything which it conceives to be good. In itself it has no moral character at all. It is the simple instinct of energetic nature, never wholly divested of a sort of rude nobility, and never destitute of influence upon the lives and upon the characters of others.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

"He that is not zealous, doth not love." Now right zeal acts, like fire, to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing Truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up; and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief; to see Truth trodden under the feet of error and profaneness, and he not able to help it up—*W. Gurnall*.

(c) I think I could give my own life, if called to do so, for the cause of Christ and the welfare of men. Why, then, should I hesitate to denounce anything that is opposed to the cause of Christ? Why should I hesitate to inveigh against anything, however sacred it may be to others, which is injurious to the welfare of men? I will not fear to condemn any organisation, or any institution, that seems to me to stand in the way of God's glory or man's redemption. It is not personal bit-

terness that leads me to use severity. It is *for* men, and not *against* men, that I am inflamed and aroused. And my indignation is strong just in proportion as those for whom it is called out are weak and unable to defend themselves.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(d) Zeal is indeed a wonder-working grace. It scales the heavens in agonizing prayer. It wrestles with Omnipotence, and takes not denial. Who can conceive what countries, districts, cities, families, and men have sprung to life, because Zeal prayed! It also lives in energetic toil. It is the moving spring in hearts of apostles, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and burning preachers of the Word. What hindrances it overleaps. What chains it breaks! What land it traverses! It girdles earth with efforts for the truth: and pyramids of saved souls are trophies to its praise.—*H. Law, D.D.*

(e) I know that the most of you are diligent in business. You never hear the ring of a guinea without being on the alert to earn it if possible. Your coats are off, and very likely your shirt sleeves are turned up when there is a chance of driving trade. That I commend; but oh! do let us have something like it in the service of Jesus Christ. Do not let us be drudging in the world, and drawing in the church; lively in the service of mammon, and then laggard in the service of Christ. Heart and soul, manliness, vigour, vehemence—let the utmost strain of all our powers be put forth in the service of Him who was never supine or dilatory in the service of our souls when they had to be redeemed.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

ZEAL

(Outline of an Address.)

(Verses 11-13.)

We can lay no claim to saintship without zeal. When wickedness grows defiant, as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, then zeal, as in the example of Phinehas, must be bold and daring.

I. The source of godly zeal.

It is from the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost. It draws its vital force from the constant operations of the Spirit in the soul. Zeal is holy fire kindled in the heart. Coldness is barrenness, and ends in death. Jeremiah said: "I will speak no more in His name." But silence was impossible. He exclaims:

"But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Grace in the heart must break forth. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

II. Godly zeal has its seat in the heart.

When David penned that beautiful Psalm relating to the majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom, he began by saying: "My *heart* is inditing a good matter." The ideas of fullness and fervour are both expressed. My heart is hot as if it had holy fire within. Zeal is not a mere thing of the brain or of intellectual power, but a reality from a sanctified heart. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes us like John, who was a burning and shining light.

III. Mark the object of holy zeal.

We are to be "zealous of good works." Men are often deceived in this matter. There is a great deal of party spirit, and deadly persecution, which often goes under the name of Christian zeal. Zeal is a mixed passion of grief and anger, fervent love and holy desire, all fused together in one holy emotion of the soul, spending itself for the glory of Christ. It is the fervour of heavenly benevolence. It thirsts for Divine knowledge, seeks for fellowship with Christ, and labours with self-denial for His sake. Zeal travails in birth for

the salvation of souls; is ready for every good work; creates opportunities of usefulness.

IV. True zeal is blended with knowledge.

Zeal without knowledge is like a blind man running on a narrow plank. This was the case with John (Luke ix. 54-56). The zeal of Paul was wrong before his conversion. The Jews had zeal without knowledge when they rejected the righteousness of Christ in order to establish their own. Moses was rash when he broke the two tables on which the Law was written, because Israel had broken one. Minerva put a golden bridle upon Pegasus that he should not fly too fast. Blind zeal, as well as an offering without an eye, will both be rejected by God. To enlighten others we must have light ourselves.

V. Zeal is forgetful of itself.

Self-denial is an element of true greatness. Every grace must be strong for Jesus "and do exploits," but this must be so especially with zeal. Paul in his perils, and Barnabas in the sale of his land, Bunyan in prison, and martyrs at the stake, Carey in India, Pierce in the pulpit, and Fuller in his travels for missions, are all worthy of imitation. Each of these men manifested forgetfulness of self. What more shall we say? "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos vi. 1).—*The Study.*

THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MOVED THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verse 13.)

"He was zealous for his God."

I. There was the enormity of their sin.

It included false doctrine and sinful practices, between which there is a closer connection than is always recognised.

II. There was the character of the instigator to the sin.

Balaam, "a strange mixture of a man," whose character has been ably analyzed by Butler, Pye Smith, Arnold, and many others.

III. There was the extent to which the sin prevailed.

Among all classes. Logan on the Social Evil.

IV. There was the misery occasioned by the sin.

To the guilty, to their connections, to the community.

V. There was the dishonour done to God.

1. We should be zealous in religion.

2. Our zeal in contending against the sins of others should begin in zeal in contending against our own.—*George Brooks.*

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE TEMPTERS.

(Verses 16-18.)

The Lord here commands Moses to avenge the wrongs which the Midianites had done to the Israelites. It is not private revenge which is here enjoined, but the avenging of a great injury inflicted by one people upon another. The carrying out of this command is given in chap. xxxi. In that place the subject will be more fully considered: at present it will be sufficient to notice the following observations, which the text suggests:—

I. Sin, whether in the people of God or in His enemies, cannot go unpunished.

The Israelites, who had been seduced into sin, had been severely punished by God. And now, as was surely just, the Midianites who had been most active in seducing them, are to be punished also. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites," &c. Tempter and tempted, both had sinned, and both must be punished for their sin. When the child is punished for his sins, the stranger who has also sinned cannot hope to escape. "Judgment must begin at the house of God," &c. (1 Pet. iv. 17). (a)

1. *Here is warning to those who tempt others to sin.* (b)

2. *Here is warning also to those who yield to temptation.* Tempters and temptations, howsoever seductive, can-

not compel you to sin. If you yield to them, you will surely suffer loss, or chastisement, or judgment. (c) (1) Avoid scenes of temptation and the society of tempters. (2) Seek confirmation in the knowledge of the right and true, so that you be not deceived by temptations. (3) Seek establishment in the practice of the right and true, so that you may the more successfully withstand and overcome temptations. (4) Above all and in all look to God for help. (d)

II. Whatever tends to lead into sin should be viewed by the godly as an enemy to be contended against.

"Vex the Midianites, and smite them; for they vex you with their wiles." Tempters and temptations often present themselves in very winning aspects; the most perilous influences are the most plausible; "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light;" but whatsoever would lead us astray must be resisted as an enemy. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," &c. (Matt. v. 29, 30). (e)

III. Under certain circumstances war is justifiable.

It is here commanded by God. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them;" &c.

For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 18-20.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *The certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

(b) The art of seduction from the ways of truth and holiness, discovers the man to be both the child and scholar of the devil. And as wise and painful ministers of Christ, who turn many to righteousness, shall have double glory in heaven; so these subtle and more active agents of the devil, who turn many from the ways of righteousness, will have a double portion of misery in hell.—*J. Flavell*.

The drunkard enkindles his neighbour's lust "putting the bottle to him." O! what a base work are such men employed about! By the law it is death for any to set fire to his

neighbour's house; what then do they deserve that set fire to the souls of men, and that no less than hell-fire?—*W. Gurnall*.

For another illustration on this point, see p. 265.

(c) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 97, 98.

(d) There are temptations in life—temptations at every turning of the street—temptations in all the evolutions of daily circumstances, temptations that come suddenly, temptations that come unexpectedly, temptations that come flatteringly. There is no true, all-conquering, all-triumphant, answer to the temptations of the devil but this—*God!* Bo

deep in your religion, have foundations that are reliable, know your calling, and God will protect you when the time of battle and storm and flood shall come. He will do it, if so be we put our trust in Him.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) In carrying out his tempting designs, Satan chooses such instruments as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for his nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is not likely David would have received that from Nabal which he took from Abigail, and thanked her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison: "Curse God and die." Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants,—though she was also within his commission,—as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter the disciple to tempt Christ; at another time His friends and kinfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met with was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off this snare without

heart-breaking: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?"—*W. Gurnoll.*

And now, if it shall be allowed to stand for our excusing, that temptation came to us circuitously, veiled with the mask of virtue, then history has recorded few crimes that can be condemned. The business of our moral vigilance, and the test of our moral strength, is to penetrate the delusion, to tear off the mask, to recognize Satan even through his transformations. We should know our tempters as the sure instincts of innocent hearts know hypocrites, "through the disguise they wear." Perhaps no tyrant, traitor, debauchee, or robber ever lived, who chose depravity for its own sake, or loved sin for its ugliness. If we are to be exculpated because temptation is cunning, oblique, crafty, then Herod was innocent, and Judas has been harshly judged; Nero is an injured man; Benedict Arnold has been misrepresented; and Jeffries and Rochester were rather sinned against than sinning. All our sins creep on us under concealment, creep on us circuitously. Our first lesson of resistance is to learn that Satan is a deceiver, transforms himself, looks an angel.—*F. D. Huntingdon, D.D.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *The plague.* See chap. xxv. 9.

Verse 4. *Take the sum of the people.* These words are supplied in the A. V. to fill up an ellipsis; and it seems to us that they are correctly supplied. Or the verse might be read thus: "From twenty years old and upward" (shall ye take the number of the children of Israel) "as the Lord commanded," &c.

Verses 1-4. See pp. 3-7, 10, 11.

Verses 9-11. See pp. 289-312.

Verses 12-14. The tribe of Simeon shows the greatest decrease, as compared with the number taken at Sinai. Then the tribe numbered 59,300; now it numbers only 22,200; which is a decrease of 37,100. Zimri, who was so disgracefully conspicuous in the recent

and terrible transgressions, was a prince of this tribe (chap. xxv. 14). It is probable that his pernicious example was largely followed in the tribe, and consequently that many perished by the plague; hence, the great decrease.

Verse 51. The total number of adult male Israelites, exclusive of Levites, was 601,730; being a decrease of 1,820 from the number taken at Sinai 38 years before. But had it not been for the recent plague, there would have been an increase of more than 22,000.

This chapter does not offer many homiletical suggestions; and some of those which it does offer we have noticed in the numbering of the people at Sinai; our treatment of it will, therefore, be necessarily brief.

THE DIVINE COMMAND AND DIRECTIONS FOR NUMBERING THE PEOPLE.

(Verses 1-4.)

On this subject little need be added to what was said concerning the numbering in the desert of Sinai (see pp. 3-7, 10, 11). The chief differences in the two censuses refer—

i. To the *place* in which the census was taken. That was “in the wilderness of Sinai;” with the Promised Land far away; this was “in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho.” Now their wanderings are over; the land of their destiny and their desire was clearly in view, &c.

ii. To the *time* at which the census was taken. Thirty-eight years have elapsed since the last was taken. During those years many thousands have found their graves in the desert; an entire generation has passed away; a truer and braver generation has arisen.

During those years in several very important respects the history of the nation had been arrested by reason of the sins of the generation which died in the wilderness.

iii. To the *design* with which the census was taken. Several of the purposes which the former numbering served (see pp. 5, 6) would be served by this also. But in addition to those this was intended—(1) as a preparation for the war against Midian, which the Lord had commanded; (2) as a preparation for the conquest of Canaan; and (3) as a preparation for a wise and equitable division of that land amongst the tribes and families of Israel. For the accomplishment of the last-named object this census was absolutely necessary.

THE APPARENT INSIGNIFICANCE AND THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 5-51.)

These uninteresting verses suggest—

I. The apparent insignificance of human life.

How dull are the details, and how wearisome the repetitions of this chapter! What a number of obscure names of unknown persons it contains! Most of them were without doubt very ordinary, common-place people; few were remarkable for intellectual activity or power; many were mean in soul; some were selfish and cowardly; others were base and wicked. Scarcely half a dozen persons can we find mentioned here who were brave or brilliant, noble or noteworthy, great or gifted. As a rule human life, as it appears here, is an ordinary and apparently insignificant thing. And this is a fair representation of human life in our own age and country. In the great majority of instances human lives seem obscure, insignificant, mean; in many instances they seem wicked and worthless. (a)

II. The real importance of human life.

This will appear if we consider that—

1. *Every man has his own individuality of being and circumstances.* No two souls are exactly alike; neither do the circumstances of any two persons correspond in every respect. How interesting does the poorest and dullest life become when we realise that, at least in some respects, it is a unique thing in the universe. (b)

2. *Every man has his own possibilities.* In the most unpromising life great possibilities slumber. “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” As a spiritual being every man is capable of eternal progress and blessedness, or of endless loss and ruin. (c)

3. *Every man has his own influence.* There is no life in the universe which does not affect others for good or for evil. “You cannot live,” as Bushnell

says, "without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others, and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well-nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without, by signs that have no ambiguous expression. If you had the seeds of a pestilence in your body, you would not have a more active contagion than you have in your tempers, tastes, and principles. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble." (d)

4. *Every man has his own accountability.* The man who has but one talent, is as certainly responsible for the use of that one, as the man of five talents is for the use of his five (Matt. xxv. 14-30). "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one," &c. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

5. *Every man is an object of deep interest to God.* To Him nothing is mean, nothing unimportant. He taught His apostles that they "should not call any man common or unclean." He knows what human nature is, and He has evinced the deepest and tenderest concern for its well-being. The poorest and obscurest human life—(1) was created by Him. "Have we not all one

Father? hath not one God created us?" "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. (2) Is *sustained* by Him. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. . . . In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (3) Was *redeemed* by Him. Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. v. 15). "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." No creature is too insignificant for the Divine interest, or too obscure for the Divine regard; and His interest and regard attest the importance of every one to whom they are extended. Mark the deep and gracious interest which our Lord manifested in the timid and long-afflicted woman who "touched the hem of His garment" (Mark v. 25-34), and in little children (Matt. xix. 13-15), and in the woman of Samaria (John iv. 4-42), and in many others who would commonly be deemed unimportant, insignificant, and of little worth. (e)

Let us learn never to slight even the lowliest and obscurest of our fellow-creatures. Let us respect human nature, as such, because it is a Divine creation; because it is Divinely redeemed, and because it was the medium of the supreme manifestation of God (comp. Phil. ii. 5-9). (f)

"Honour all men."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You must have already noticed that this chapter is as true as any chapter in human history, especially as it shows so clearly what we ourselves have found out, that the most of people are extremely uninteresting. They are names and nothing more. They are producers and consumers, tenants and taxpayers, and that is all; they are without wit, music, piquancy, enterprise, or keenness of sympathy. They listen to your best anecdotes, and say, "'m"; they hear of Livingstone with a shudder; they suppose there must be a great noise at Niagara. Such people were Seth and Enos, Mahalaleel and Jared; respectable, quiet, plodding; said "Good night" to one another regularly, and remarked briefly upon the weather, and died. Just what many now-a-days seem to do. Put down on paper everything that has passed between you and

some people, and you will find how very little paper is needed. Now I want to show you that such people are often unjustly estimated, and to remind you that if all stars were of the same size the sky would look very odd, much like a vast chess-board with circles instead of squares.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) We are all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man; the poetic dreamer and the prosaic clown; the daring adventurer and the self-regarding coward; the child of genius and the creature of darkness; yet all claim to be men, and all may theoretically acknowledge the same God and Redeemer. These are facts with which we have to deal, whether we open the Bible or not, whether we acknowledge a system of Divine Providence or not, whether we are atheists or saints.—*Ibid.*

(c) Even the *worst* man has the seal of God upon him somewhere. We must not forget that man *is* man, whatever be his creed or his status, and that his very *manhood* should be the guarantee of some excellence. The men of the world and the men of the Church are God's; the barren rock is His, as is the glowing garden of the sunniest summer; the worm crawling on the outermost edge of life, and the angel shining above the stars, are both under the care of God. Do not, then, speak of one man as if he were created by the devil, and another as if descended from heaven. Let us even in the worst expect to find some broken ray of former glory, as in the best we shall find some evil which makes us mourn that he is not better still.—*Ibid.*

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 485, 486.

(e) The play and interplay of everything that is within man, and the products of this play and interplay, are all before the mind of God. And He contemplates man, not merely as a creature that is subject to the laws of gravity, of light, of hunger and thirst, and to the wants that the body begets; but as a creature that carries within him a soul-force that is prolific, vastly productive, and full of little unregarded points of history. God sees and

sympathises with all the things that relate to the welfare of man; though they be infinitesimal, though they be fugitive, and though they be unthought of even by the subject of them. There is nothing that can transpire, which has any connection with the moral benefit of His creatures, that God is indifferent to.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) Thy Maker has become like thyself. Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not anything made that was made, is that same Word which tabernacled among us and was made flesh, made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. O manhood, was there ever such news as this for thee! Poor manhood, thou weak worm of the dust, far lower than the angels, lift up thy head, and be not afraid! Poor manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the worms, be not thou abashed, even in the presence of seraphs, for next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between; nay, not next to God, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus, who is God, is man also; Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born, and lived and died as we also do.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE INTERESTING HIDDEN IN THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verses 5-51.)

I. Here is the commonplace.

The forty-seven verses before us are prosaic and dull reading. They tell us that the sons of Reuben were Hanoeh, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; they give us similar details concerning the other sons of Jacob; they tell us that the families of the respective tribes numbered so many, and so many; and they further inform us that certain persons died. And in this long list of names there are very few that have any history connected with them to awaken our interest; and so it certainly seems a monotonous and tedious chapter. But in this respect it resembles human life in all ages and countries. How commonplace, and even humdrum, is the life of by far the greater part of mankind! how uneventful, ordinary, &c. (a)

II. Here is the interesting in the commonplace.

If we look into this chapter carefully we shall discover certain words

which are suggestive of deep and tender interests. *Sons* is a word of frequent occurrence, so also is the word *children*; we also read of *daughters* (ver. 33), and of a *daughter* (ver. 46). A profound human interest attaches to words like these. They imply other words of an interest equally deep and sacred; *e.g., father, mother.* Unspeakable and unfathomable solicitudes were awakened in the parents' hearts by each child named in this chapter or included in this census. What hopes and fears, what desires and prayers, what wealth of holiest love, gathered round the infancy and childhood of every one of the "six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty" who were "able to go to war in Israel!" The humblest, dullest, most commonplace life has its relations. The least regarded person in all the thousands of Israel was "somebody's bairn."

We also read of *death* (ver. 19);

most of the names which are here recorded belonged to men who were gathered to their fathers; from the time of the twelve sons of Jacob here mentioned to the time of this census in the plains of Moab, many thousands of Israelites had died, of all ranks and of all ages. Reflection upon these facts awakens a mournful interest in the mind. Some had died in infancy, beauteous buds of rich promise, leaving bereaved parents to mourn in pain and sore disappointment. And some had died in young and vigorous manhood, workers smitten down just as they were setting resolutely to work; they passed away leaving many a gentle maiden desolate and heart-stricken. And others had died in life's prime, leaving widows and orphans to mourn their irreparable loss. Loving mothers, too, had heard the home-call, and must needs resign their dear children to the care of other hearts and the tendance of other hands.

Again, frequent mention is made in this chapter of *the family* and of *families*; and these words are suggestive of pure and beautiful associations. Family life involves and promotes mutual affection, and forbearance, and helpfulness; it enshrines and fosters some of the holiest experiences and exercises of which human nature is capable.

Thus in this commonplace census-record we discover themes of profound and perennial interest.

III. The importance of the commonplace.

Impatience of the ordinary and the prosaic is an evidence of an unsound judgment and an unhealthy moral life.

1. *Most of life's duties are commonplace.* The duties of our trade or profession, and the duties of our family and social relations, are, for the most part, unromantic, monotonous, and, many would say, dull. Yet, how important it is that these duties be faithfully fulfilled! (b)

2. *The greater number of persons are commonplace.* Persons characterised by extraordinary endowments, or brilliant abilities, or other marked distinctions, are very rare. The great majority of mankind are plain, prosaic people. (c)

3. *The greater part of life is commonplace.* To say that extraordinary scenes, circumstances, and deeds are very exceptional, is a manifest truism; and yet many persons, in whom the craving for the exciting and the sensational is deep and frequent, need to be reminded of the truism. If the ordinary and commonplace be sound and true, all will be well; but if these be corrupt and false, all will be ill. (d)

Be it ours to give the charm of poetry to prosaic duties, by doing them heartily; and to ennoble our commonplace lives, by living them faithfully and holily. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point, see p. 496.

(b) The best part of human history is never written at all. Family life, patient service, quiet endurance, the training of children, the resistance of temptation,—these things are never mentioned by the historian. The man who burns down an abbey or a minster is immortalised in history; the poor house-wife who makes a pound go as far as thirty shillings, and pinches herself that she may give her boy a quarter's more schooling, is not known even to have lived. Guy Fawkes is known all over the world; but your honest father, who has given you a good example and a good training, is hardly known six doors

away from his own residence. If we remember these things we shall mitigate the contempt with which we are apt to speak of so-called nobodies. Because we admire brilliance we need not despise usefulness. When your little child is ill, he needs kindness more than genius, and it will be of small service to him if his mother is good at epigrams, but bad at wringing out a wet cloth for his burning brow. —Joseph Parker, D.D.

(c) It is wonderful how oddly and whimsically fame is gained: Methuselah is famed because he was the oldest man, and Sampson because he was the strongest man; another is known because he can walk upon a tight rope, and another because he can swim across a

channel. If it were in my power to preach the most splendid sermon ever uttered by mortal lips, not a newspaper in the world would take the slightest notice of it; but if I put up an umbrella in the pulpit or tore the pulpit Bible in two, many a paragraph would report the eccentricity. A splendid sermon would be thought of as interesting only to the few, but an act of folly would be regarded as of universal interest. Thus it is (though it may not seem so) that things get into history. Robertson, of Brighton, was hardly known in his own town during his life-time, whereas another clergyman in Brighton dressed himself in a coat of many colours, and made quite a figure in the principal newspapers. Any man living can have a world-wide notoriety to-morrow, can have his name telegraphed throughout the whole range of civilisation, and be the subject of editorial comment throughout Christendom. Shoot any member of the royal family, and see if this be not so. Everybody knows that Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, but nobody knows that but for you two orphan boys would never have had a chance in life. No preacher has a really world-wide name, known in slums and garrets, backwoods, steamboats, thoroughfares and palaces, who did not in some way get it through "contemptible speech."—*Ibid.*

(d) The circumstances which have most influence upon the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most

part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil affected by a single statesman can bear, to the good or evil of a great social system.—*Lord Macaulay.*

(e) The hour will be dark in which we pine for things romantic at the expense of a quiet and deep life. Christianity teaches us that no child is to be despised, no work is to be considered mean, and that suffering may have all the honour of service. Woe to us when we can live only on stimulants! When the house is accounted dull, when only sensational books can be endured, when music and drama and painted show are essential to our happiness, life has gone down to a low ebb and death is at the door. Let us do our quiet work as if we were preparing for kings, and watch attentively at the door, for the next comer may be the Lord Himself.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE DISTINGUISHED RISING OUT OF THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verse 9.)

"Famous in the congregation."

There are several persons mentioned in this chapter to whom these words may be applied; some of them being famous for their gifts and virtues, and others, alas! for their failings and vices. Here are—

I. Distinguished rebels.

"This Dathan and Abiram, famous in the congregation, strove against Moses," &c. (vers. 9, 10, and chap. xvi. 1-35; and see pp. 289-301, 305-307, 311, 312). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were notorious by reason of—

1. *Their sin*, which comprised envy, rebellion, presumption, and profanity.

2. *Their punishment*. Korah was consumed by fire from Jehovah (see p.

290), and the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram.

Let us regard these prominent sinners as *beacons*, and shun the sins which ruined them.

II. Distinguished profaners of sacred ordinances.

"Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered," &c. (ver. 61; Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46).

1. *Their sin*.

2. *Their punishment*. (On both these points see pp. 45, 46.) These profane persons also should be regarded as *beacons*. Shun profanity; be reverent.

III. Distinguished leaders and rulers.

"Moses and Aaron" (ver. 64),

"Moses and Eleazar the priest" (ver. 63). Here are three persons honourably distinguished; and Moses especially so.

Moses was famous for—

1. *His great abilities and attainments.* He was eminently gifted and learned. "Moses was learned," &c. (Acts vii. 22).

2. *His saintly character.* Very remarkable is the testimony to this in chap. xii. 3-8. See pp. 219-220. (a) Aaron also was a good man (see pp. 385, 386), and so was Eleazar.

3. *His great mission.* Under the Lord God Moses was the emancipator, the leader, the law-giver, and the ruler of Israel. Aaron, too, had rendered signal and invaluable services to the people. And Eleazar was a useful man.

4. *His extensive influence.* Perhaps no man in any age of the world's history has exercised a more extensive influence than Moses, both as regards time and space. (b)

These honourably distinguished men let us look up to as *examples*, and imitate their excellencies.

IV. Distinguished heroes.

"Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (ver. 65). These men were "famous in the congregation" by reason of—

1. *Their faith in God.* See chap. xiii. 30; xiv. 8, 9; and pp. 237, 238.

2. *Their courage in duty.* See pp. 247, 248.

3. *Their faithfulness to God.* Striking testimony is borne concerning Caleb in this respect in chap. xiv. 24 (and see pp. 260-262). And "Joshua's life has been noted as one of the very few which

are recorded in history with some fullness of detail, yet without any stain upon them."

4. *Their eminent services.* Caleb, as one of the spies and as a brave man, and Joshua as a spy, as a general, and as the successor of Moses, rendered illustrious and priceless service to the nation.

5. *Their honourable destiny.* Of all those who were numbered at Sinai, from twenty years old and upwards, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were permitted to enter and possess the Promised Land (vers. 64, 65). This was the reward of their faithfulness, &c.

In them also we have *examples* worthy of imitation in many respects.

Lessons.

1. *Mere distinction is not a thing to be coveted.* The character of the distinction is a question of vital importance. (c)

2. *Men may rise to the highest distinctions from the common ranks of their fellow men.* With the exception of the education which Moses received, none of these illustrious men had any advantages of birth, training, or social status; but the reverse. (d)

3. *The highest spiritual distinctions may be attained by every man through Jesus Christ.* By the grace of God eminent goodness is possible to each of us. We may be "made kings and priests unto God" by Jesus Christ. (e)

4. *The supreme importance of personal character and conduct.* We are making our reputation now. A destiny of glory or of shame we are day by day preparing ourselves for.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) To do a good thing or a great thing occasionally is not enough to constitute true nobility of character. At the basis of all such character there must be some diviner elements, and just as those elements are allowed to predominate within do they lend grandeur to all that we do. Just as Jesus taught His disciples that the childlike disposition was essential to their having a place in the kingdom,

so the Great Man must think nothing of his own sacrifices, but do everything in the spirit of perfect self-oblivion. This condition of soul is inseparable from those profounder virtues whose moral force can be determined only by their moral fitness, and which shed the truest glory on every form of human greatness.

Such virtues shone brightly in the man Moses, in whose character we lack no attri-

bute—no excellence. It was the rich and rare combination of these higher qualities which gave strength and completeness to his whole man. Had he been less virtuous he would have been less illustrious. His graces gave lustre and glory to his actions. Pure in the last and lowest recess of his heart, he left the impression of his moral perfection on all that he did. If it be the virtuous soul that truly lives—lives “though the whole world turn to coal,” and burn to ashes, then what must have been the force and the fulness of Moses’s virtue! It was purged from all that is sickly and sentimental, and had in it a strength and a robustness indicative of the man.—*Robert Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) His is indeed a noble character that lives through all time; though formed and built up within the limits of an earthly life, it suffers not from the waste of years; and after the sweep of ages multiplied by ages it retains its integrity and glory, and like some first and fixed star, shines with undiminished light and lustre. It is, in a certain sense, true that all character is deathless—that it is something which survives all the changes and the dissolutions of this lower world, and is destined to come out as an abiding and immutable reality in the future; but they are the few whose principles and whose doings can be recommended as a deeper study, or whose life can be held up as a model for universal imitation. They must be men of rare composition, and in whom meet all the higher and the richer qualities of both the mind and the heart. Theirs must be a sublime consecration to the common good, and they must have no other idea of life than to fulfil the purposes of Heaven and to add to the sum of human happiness. They must not pass their days in any dreamy, visionary sentimentalism; but watching the course of events, must brace themselves up for corresponding action. Catching the inspiration of a higher world, they must be heroic for God and for truth. Here Moses stands first and most conspicuous. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. From the very first the conduct of his people had been such as might have ruffled the most placid bosom, and provoked the meekest spirit, but he was pacific when he might have been militant, patient when he might have been indignant, and even heart-loving when he might have invoked the wrath of Heaven on their heads. His was a noble heart: one purer or truer never beat within a human breast. Noble by nature, he was nobler still in the height and the force of his virtue. Not only is his name hewn out on Time as on a rock, but he “stands on Time as on a pedestal,” with the eyes of all nations

fixed upon him, and with the people of every land offering to him the incense of a loftier praise. His is a name greater than that of the Pharaohs, and a monument his which will outlive the years of the pyramids.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 498. (c)

(d) More true greatness comes from the cottage than the palace. Socrates worked with his father as a statuary; and with chisel in hand had learned to touch the stone into a figure, ere he knew how to reason with philosophers in the schools. Luther came up from the dark deep mines at Mansfield to be the head and the leader of a movement only second in importance to the introduction of Christianity. Richardson, in the humble capacity of a printer’s apprentice, was wont to buy his own candle, that his master might not be defrauded and steal an hour from sleep to improve his mind and lay the foundation for future literary fame. The author of Lorenzo de Medici, surrounded by the dry dust of a lawyer’s office, and with nothing more than the rudiments of a common education, rose to the highest eminence; while Morrison, the Chinese scholar and missionary, laboured at the trade of a last and boot-maker, and kept his lamp from being blown out by so placing a volume of Matthew Henry’s Commentary, as at once to guard the flame, and make it easy for him to lay up its contents in his mind and memory. Genius and greatness are the property of no one class. Heaven bestows His gifts according to His own will, but that will is supremely gracious to every order and every rank. While a Moses is taken from the court of Pharaoh, an Elisha is found following the plough: there is a David tending sheep, as well as a Daniel mingling with princes. If Milton is qualified to be the secretary of the Protector of England, at a crisis in England’s history, Bunyan is Divinely taught to be the guide and the counsellor of his race on their way to glory.—*Ibid.*

(e) The child-spirit is true greatness. “Whoso abaseth himself shall be exalted.” “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” “Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps, and pyramids are pyramids in vales.” A man may be great in grace. By the very necessity of the case all outward distinctions must become less and less, but spiritual attributes endure as long as the being of the soul.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

It seems to me

’Tis only noble to be good.

Kind hearts are more than coronets,

And simple faith than Norman blood.

—*Tennyson.*

RULES FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 52-56.)

In these directions concerning the division of the land, two rules are laid down:—

i. The extent of each inheritance must be in proportion to the number of persons in each tribe and family. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names," &c. (verses 52-54). Note, *the entire equitableness of this rule, and see in it an illustration of all God's dealings with men in this respect.* "The works of His hands are verity and judgment," &c. (Psalm cxi. 7, 8). "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

ii. The situation of each inheritance must be determined by lot. "Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot," &c. (verses 55, 56). It seems that first, lots were to be drawn for the determination of the general situation of the territory of each tribe, and then these territories were to be divided according to the number of persons in the respective tribes and families. Note, *the wisdom of this arrangement.* It would tend—(1) to prevent dissatisfaction, jealousies, and strife; (2) to inspire in each tribe the persuasion that their inheritance was appointed them by God Himself. The result of the lot was regarded by most nations as determined by God (comp. Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18). So its use was appointed in this case that the Israelites "might rest in that division no less than if it had been done by the immediate voice of God from heaven."

We may further consider these arrangements as an illustration of—

I. The sovereignty of God in bestowing His gifts.

1. *The manifestation of this sovereignty.* It is exhibited (1) in His appointment of the rules for the division of the land; and (2) in His determination of the locality of the territory of each tribe. (a)

2. *The righteousness of His sovereignty.* The rules which He gave to Moses for this important business were conspicuously equitable. (b)

II. The truth that in the arrangements of God provision is made for all His creatures.

By the commands here given to Moses adequate provision is made for every family of Israel. In the order of creation He provided for the supply of human needs before He created man. He makes constant provision for beasts, birds, and all the inferior orders of creation (Psa. civ. 27, 28; cxlv. 15, 16; cxlvii. 9); and shall He not much more regard man and his needs? And as a matter of fact, in return for man's labour, the earth brings forth an abundant supply for the necessities of all men. (c)

Our subject presents to us—

1. *A reason for contentment.* Since God appoints our lot, let us be content with it, and make the best of it. "My times are in Thy hand." "He shall choose our inheritance for us." (d)

2. *A reason for thankfulness.* Let God's provision for us awaken our gratitude to Him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c. (Psa. ciii. 1-5).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honour upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labours and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort in their whole lives; some

sweat and toil, and what they labour for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather. One hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head. A sceptre is

put into one man's hand, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in dung-hill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the Divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the Maker of the poor as well as the rich (Prov. xxii. 2), not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth and the fulness thereof is His propriety; and He hath as much a right as Joseph had to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins He please.—*Charnocke*.

(b) This dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical, but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If His throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good; because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since He is His own rule, and His nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, He cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom, justice, and purity. In all the exercises of His sovereign right, He is never unattended with those perfections of his nature. Might not God by his absolute power have pardoned men's guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of His creatures? but in regard of His truth pawned in His threatening, and in regard of His justice, which demanded satisfaction, He would not. Might not God by His absolute sovereignty admit a man into His friendship, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to His wisdom and holiness, He will not. May He not by His absolute power refuse to accept a

man that desires to please Him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of His goodness and righteousness, He will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God's sovereignty, that He should love it; but in regard of His goodness it is necessary, and He will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of His power, so He never exerts the utmost of His sovereignty; because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render Him perfectly adorable to the creature.—*Ibid*.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 202.

(d) Are you labouring in a village, and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not, you had better not entertain that notion; it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. "To fill up the sphere we have" should be our duty and our joy. "It is only a nutshell." Well, then, it will take less filling. "It is only a little village." Well, then, you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to abide just where he is. Nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there, he is bound by every consideration that can stir a true man's heart and strength, to make the very best of his position.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 166.

THE NUMBERING OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 57-62.)

On this subject, comp. chap. iii. 14-22; and see pp. 53-55.

On ver. 61 comp. Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46.

On ver. 62, the last clause, compare chap. xviii. 20; and see pp. 339-347.

AFFLICTION: ITS TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS.

(Verse 61.)

These words refer to one of the most interesting of the narratives of the Old Testament. It is contained in the tenth chap. of Leviticus. . . .

Alas for Aaron, the father of these young men! His was a bitter portion—to see his sons on whom he had just looked with delight, as set apart for the most honourable of offices, stretched

suddenly at his feet! Not only slain; but slain under circumstances so appalling. They fell not merely in consequence of sin, but whilst in the very act of its commission, without a moment for repentance; so that hope, always ready in such cases to fasten even on straws, could scarcely have found place in Aaron's breast. Could Aaron feel

too deeply, or lament too bitterly the slaughter of his children? Alas! for Aaron, he has more to do than to bear the grievous trial! He must bear it without a sigh, without a tear, as though he felt it not; but sternly acquiesced in the righteousness of the visitation. For no sooner had Nadab and Abihu fallen than Moses delivered the message from God to Aaron—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me; and before all the people I will be glorified." This was nothing but to announce authoritatively to the afflicted father that his sons had died for their sin; and must have added to the anguish which came climbing up for vent. But the message, moreover, required submission. And Aaron exhibited this submission: "Aaron held his peace."

But, surely, he may weep! Surely he and his surviving children may obtain at least that relief which sorrow finds in the being expressed. No! even this is denied him. It would be inconsistent with the sanctity of the priestly office that those who bear it should display any grief at occurrences by which that sanctity has been defended and demonstrated. "And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people." Others, as Moses went on to say, may bewail the dead; but not those who had loved them best, and must feel their loss most. Indeed, it were not easy to exaggerate the greatness of the trial thus allotted to Aaron. It is a beautiful thing in the Christian religion that it is so constructed with a due regard to our natural sensibilities that it neither supposes us stoics, nor seeks to make us such; not demanding of us that we should not sorrow, but only that we should not sorrow even as those who have no hope. Indeed, tears are nature's relief—nature's balm; and, through a mysterious power, they ease the pain by which they are produced. We have cause, then, to be thankful,

not only for the consolation which the Gospel offers so abundantly to the mourning, but for the power and the privilege of weeping. And when ye feel how much of love there is, not only in the chastisement which causes the tears, but in the allowance to shed them, then you may estimate the heaviness of the trial which Aaron had to bear, and you will look at once with commiseration and admiration on the high priest of Israel, as he bends by his dead children, and yet obeys to the letter the rigid command which prevented him showing any of the ordinary indications of grief.

It appears clear, from the remainder of the history, that Aaron, though he suppressed the signs of sorrow, was disquieted at heart, and so overpowered and overcome as scarcely to be master of his actions. . . . Not only was Aaron forbidden to mourn; it was required of him that he should proceed with the business of a complicated ritual—that ritual, of the peril of swerving from which had just been given so tremendous a proof. No wonder, then, if, in his agitation and perplexity, the high priest omit on so trying a day certain prescribed forms, or make mistakes in the performance of his office. This seems to have been exactly what took place. A goat had been offered as a sin-offering, and, according to the Levitical law, the flesh of the sin-offering ought to be eaten by the priest in the holy place. When, however, Moses came to inquire, he found the goat had been burnt without the tabernacle, in place of being eaten according to the law. Then Moses expostulated; fearing, in all likelihood, that this act of disobedience would produce a repetition of the awful scene of the morning. "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place? Ye should, indeed, have eaten it in the holy place as I commanded." And then Aaron, though not immediately addressed, but knowing that the blame was with him, if with any—Aaron took on himself to reply. And we do not think that, in the whole

range of Scripture, there are more plaintive or more pathetic words than his reply. He begins by stating that there had on the whole been due attention to the services of the ministry. "Behold this day have they offered their sin-offering and their burnt-offering before the Lord." He felt, notwithstanding what had been duly done, that there had been a departure from the law, and that it became him to say something to account for it, or to excuse it. But must he enlarge on his affliction, and, by dwelling on its greatness, seek to extenuate his omission? He could not do this. His heart was overflowing; and, if he had once given vent to his feelings, he would have been completely unmanned, and thus would have transgressed the commandment, which forbade his showing grief. He, therefore, trusted himself to give only, as it were, a hint of his sufferings, believing that an affectionate brother could not need more. He only said, "Such things have befallen me!" Oh! what a vast amount of suppressed anguish, of hidden, but agonised feeling, seems gathered into these few syllables, uttered, we may believe, with an almost choked voice—"Such things have befallen me." And then he just ventures a doubt, which would seem to show that he had not acted altogether through inadvertency, but partly from a feeling that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice—"If I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" Moses has nothing to say against this touching reply from his brother. It seems to have satisfied him. And forasmuch as we must regard him as guided through the whole transaction by the immediate direction of God, we may consider that the answer of Aaron was such as found acceptance with the Almighty himself. Moses was the instrument in making known the Divine will; and he was "*content*"—that is the expression in Scripture.

Now, it is upon this CONTENTMENT of Moses, considered as expressive of

the approval of God, that we design to ground the remainder of our discourse.

The case with which we are presented is simply this, There is a man who is suffering beneath the oppression of extraordinary affliction. His grief causes him to neglect some portion of religious duty, or incapacitates him, as he imagines, for its discharge. Undoubtedly he is to blame; but God, who knoweth our frailty, remembering we are but dust, accepts in excuse the greatness of his sorrow; and restrains the vengeance which the fault might have otherwise provoked.

Let us separate the case from its original circumstances; and let us see whether we may not expect, whenever there is a similar case, that there will be a similar acceptance of the severity of sorrow in excuse for some failure of duty. . . . Grief tends to unfit us for religious duties, while it makes more essential their unwearied discharge. We can never have greater need to study the Bible, never greater need to offer petitions to God, than when visited with trouble; and yet it is often more than commonly hard, when trouble is upon us, to fix attention on Scripture, or be instant in prayer. The Christian will, on that very account, write bitter things against himself, and aggravate his suffering by self-reproach and condemnation.

It not unfrequently happens that cases such as this fall within the observation of the minister. He visits an individual, perhaps the mother of a family, from whom there has been suddenly snatched away an object of deep love. He finds her scarcely able to exert any control over her feelings. She can do little but weep and utter complaints to show the anguish of her soul. And it is no part of the Christian minister's office to upbraid the mourner, as though it were not lawful to sorrow thus bitterly. He will rather show by his expressions of sympathy that he is fully sensible of the greatness of her affliction, and will mingle his tears with hers in just tribute to the dead. But then it will be his endeavour to impress

on the sufferer the duties of affliction, urge to the striving to be resigned to God's will, and to the finding consolation in God's Word. And this will bring out fresh complaint; the sufferer will lament that she cannot pray; that the heart seems turned to stone, so that when she has most need of religion, she has become altogether incapacitated for its duties. What should bind her to her Maker seems only to estrange her more from Him. Indeed, this would be a perplexing case for the minister, if he were not warranted in replying, that great grief, by its very nature, stupefies the mind, and that God is too gracious to impute to His children omissions or failures which such grief may occasion. He may say to the sufferer that she is not to try her religion by what it is when stunned by the blow; and that her Creator, who can accurately distinguish between wilful neglect, and that produced by the bewilderment of an overwrought spirit, will assuredly not be extreme in marking what he knows anguish has kept her from performing. He will never be warranted in telling an offender that he might safely neglect religious duties; but when he finds that affliction has caused certain duties to be neglected, and that the neglect was one of the things which pressed on the conscience, he is warranted, we believe, in referring to the contentment of Moses, when he had heard Aaron's answer, and endeavouring so to soothe the agitated parent. And this does not less hold good under circumstances of sickness. It is beyond all dispute, that bodily pain is a most engrossing thing; so that whilst it is being endured, the soul, in general, can do little more than sympathise with its suffering tenement. Even the righteous, when dread sickness is on them, feel disabled for spiritual exercises, though conscious that they were never more in need of communion with God. Accordingly, one continually hears complaints from pious persons, as disease bears them down, that they cannot fix their minds as they desire on heavenly things; that they cannot pray with fervency, much

less rejoice in tribulation. The just way of dealing with these persons, seems to be that of requiring them to take their difficulties into account when they would estimate their spiritual condition. They do utterly wrong in judging of what they *are* on a sick bed, by what they *do* on a sick bed, and feel, as they toss to and fro, that they cannot find rest. I never ask how a Christian died; but how a Christian lived.

We have a few words to say on another supposition—namely, that it was not through inadvertence, but rather through design, as feeling himself but ill-prepared to eat the sin-offering, that Aaron did not exactly conform to the prescriptions of the law. If you consider the words which Aaron uses—"And if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" you may judge that Aaron had probably imagined that it would be better for him to burn the sin-offering, though contrary to law, than to eat it with heaviness of heart. There was perhaps a feeling in him that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice. And if this were the case, we must gather from the contentment which Moses expressed—not perhaps that he acquiesced in the reasons which Aaron alleged—but that even a mistake, when caused by a reverential fear of the mysteries of religion, will be looked upon compassionately by God, who reads the heart.

Now we would imitate Moses in this particular, and not deal harshly with those who, from the same reason as Aaron, neglected to feed on the sin-offering, in and through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It may be true that the majority of those who absent themselves from the sacrament, absent themselves in contempt of so awful a mystery, or in assumed respect for, which is but a cloak for determination not to separate from the world. But there are some who are tremblingly alive to the sacredness of the ordinance; who would receive it if they dared, but who are withheld by a consciousness of

their sinfulness, a sinfulness which they deplore and long to remove. This was Aaron's case, and God forbid that this should be harshly dealt with! They are under a mistake; but their mistake is in one sense only an excellence. We would teach them that their feeling of unfitness constitutes their fitness for the sacrament or "means of grace," which is not for those (if such there are) who have no sins to struggle with and lament. We would thus not upbraid them with their mistake, but endeavour to show that it was only to be proved in order to its being corrected. We do not suppose that Moses would have been "content," had he

found on successive days that the sin-offering had not been eaten. He had said enough to show that Aaron was wrong; but whilst abstaining from re-proving for the past, he undoubtedly expected that he would obey the law for the future. It is the same with those whom an habitual sense of unworthiness has withheld from the sacrament. They may plead their excuse whilst they have not been duly taught what the sacrament requires from its recipients; but it partakes of the nature of sin, if they continue absent when they know that a feeling of unworthiness is the very thing required.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

(Verses 63-65.)

In these verses we have a triple illustration of the Divine faithfulness:—

I. The faithfulness of God to His threatenings.

"These are they that were numbered," &c. (vers. 63-65). The judgment which God pronounced thirty-eight years previous He has now completely fulfilled (comp. chap. xiv. 11-39; and see pp. 250—252, 257, 258, 263-265). (a)

1. *The immense number of the condemned does not avail for the escape of any one of them.* Sentence was passed upon upwards of six hundred thousand men; "and there was not left a man of them." "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21).

2. *The lapse of time before the complete execution of the sentence does not avail for the escape of any one.* Thirty-eight years passed away before the judgment pronounced was fully carried out; but ultimately not one upon whom it was passed escaped. "Because sentence against an evil work is not,"

&c. (Eccles. viii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 3-10). (b)

II. The faithfulness of God to His purposes.

Though God completely cut off that rebellious generation; yet for the carrying out of His own plans He raised up another and far superior generation (comp. chap. xiv. 12, 31; and see pp. 251, 264). (c)

III. The faithfulness of God to His promises.

He promised to spare Caleb and Joshua, and to bring them unto the Promised Land (chap. xiv. 23, 30); and He spared them, and in due season brought them into that land (see pp. 258, 264). (d)

Here is encouragement to trust Him.
Conclusion.

The great lesson of the subject is a solemn warning against unbelief. This warning is urgently enforced in Heb. iii. 7—iv. 2. Let us give earnest heed unto it, so that at last we may enter into the perfect and heavenly rest.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 225, 374.

(b) God says, "To-day I will work a wonder in your eyes; ye shall see marvellous things; I will beat down the proud throne and the great mountain." He says that, and then leaves us there. And a thousand years go by; the proud throne is still there, and the great mountain rears its shoulders through a thousand summers and a thousand winters. Men say, "The word has been forgotten." But the word is there. It is a factor in human history, and is working, and will work. It may be in ten thousand years the word comes up, and the men of the day say to one another, "All this is done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 312.

(c) It is necessary to our conception of an infinitely perfect Being, that we admit an *eternal purpose* regarding all that He has done or said. The idea of experiments undertaken and abandoned is, so far as He is concerned, utterly untenable. So is that of a change of purpose. "He is of one mind." He has purposed all He does, and He does or will do all He has purposed. Whether He create a world, or redeem a man, it is in pursuance of His *eternal will* that it should be so.—*W. Leask, D.D.*

(d) If He enters into engagements, promises, and covenants, He acts with perfect freedom. These are acts of grace to which He is under no compulsion; and they can never, therefore, be reluctant engagements which He would wish to violate, because they flow from a ceaseless and changeless inclination to bestow benefits, and a delight in the exercise of goodness. They can never be made in haste or unadvisedly; for the whole case of His creatures to the end of time is before Him, and no circumstances can arise which to Him are new or unforeseen. He cannot want the power to fulfil His promises, because He is omnipotent; He cannot promise beyond His ability to make good, because His fulness is infinite; finally, "He cannot deny Himself," because He is "not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent;" and thus every promise which He has made is guaranteed, as well by His natural attributes of wisdom, power, and sufficiency, as by His perfect moral rectitude.—*Richard Watson.*

Every promise is built upon four pillars:—God's *justice* or holiness, which will not suffer Him to deceive; His *grace* or goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; His *truth*, which will not suffer Him to change; and His *power*, which makes Him able to accomplish.—*H. G. Salter.*

For additional illustrations on *God's faithfulness*, see p. 460.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The request made by the daughters of Zelophehad arose naturally out of the census, which was taken with a view to the distribution of the land amongst the people, and the Divine directions for the distribution, both of which are recorded in the previous chapter.

Verse 1 (comp. chap. xxvi. 29, 33).

Verse 2. *All the congregation* "denotes the college of elders, which represented the congregation and administered its affairs."

The door of the tabernacle, i.e., where the elders met in solemn assembly.

Verse 3. *Died in his own sin.* Zelophehad had not taken part in any of the rebellions which had been avenged by special judgments, but had died "under the general sentence of ex-

clusion from the land of promise passed on all the older generation."

Verse 12. *This mount Abarim* (see notes on chap. xxi. 20).

Verse 13 (see chap. xx. 23-29).

Verse 14 (see chap. xx. 7-13).

Verse 16 (comp. chap. xvi. 22).

Verse 18. *In whom is the spirit*, i.e., "The spiritual endowment requisite for the office he was called to fill."

Verse 20. *Of thine honour*; "i.e. of thy dignity and authority. Joshua was constituted forthwith vice-leader under Moses, by way of introduction to his becoming chief after Moses's death."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *He shall stand before Eleazar, &c.* In this respect Joshua did not enjoy the exalted privilege of Moses (comp. chap. xii. 6-8; Deut. xxxiv. 10).

The judgment of Urim, &c. Rather, "the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah." "Urim is an abbreviation for Urim and Thummim, and denotes the means with which the high priest was instructed of ascertaining the Divine will and counsel in all the important business of the congregation."

—Keil and Del. What these means were we do not know. "'Light and perfection' would probably be the best English equivalent" for the words Urim and Thummim. See an excellent article on the subject by Professor Plumptre in Dr. Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

THE REQUEST OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD: THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

(Verses 1-11.)

Consider—

I. The request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

1. *Was presented in an orderly and becoming manner.* "They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest," &c. (verse 2). They made their request in a regular manner, and to the proper authorities.

2. *Was eminently fair and reasonable.* While their father, by reason of sin, was in common, with the generation to which he belonged, excluded from the Promised Land, yet he had not done anything for which his children should be deprived of an inheritance therein. And it certainly does not seem reasonable that they should be so deprived because they were all daughters—that they should be disqualified because of their sex. (a)

3. *Indicated becoming respect for their father.* They vindicate him from the guilt of sharing in any of the rebellions except the general one; and they evince an earnest desire for the perpetuation of his name and family. If no inheritance were granted to them as his heirs, then his name would cease from among his family. But if a possession among the brethren of their father were granted to them, then his name would be preserved: for when an heiress of landed property became a wife, her husband married into her family rather than she into his, and "the sons who inherited the maternal property were received through this inheritance into the family of their mother, i.e., of their grandfather on

the mother's side." We have examples of this in the case of Jair, who was reckoned a Manassite, though his father was a descendant of Judah (chapter xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 14; 1 Chron. ii. 21, 22), and in the case of Jarha and his wife, the daughter of Sheshan (1 Chron. ii. 34, 35).

4. *Implied faith in the promise of God to give Canaan to the Israelites.* Though the Canaanites were in full possession of the land, and the Israelites had not even entered therein, yet they ask for their portion as if the land were already possessed by their people.

5. *Implied an earnest desire for a portion in the Promised Land.*

II. The Divine answer to their request.

1. *Was given by Jehovah to Moses in response to his enquiries.* "And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses," &c. Notice here—(1) The humility of Moses. He does not presume to decide the case himself, &c. (2) The direction which God grants to the humble. "The meek will He guide in judgment," &c.

2. *Commended the cause of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right."

3. *Granted the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "Thou shalt surely give them a possession, &c." (ver. 7). (b)

4. *Included a general law of inheritance.* "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (vers. 8-11). Thus a great benefit accrued to the nation from the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Some disabilities still accrue to woman, especially in respect to property, and just payment for her labour. Tasks that she is fully competent to every way, public opinion and false custom will not let her do, cruelly telling her she shall sooner starve; and for work that she actually does as well and as rapidly as her companion, man, she receives only a quarter of his wages; both of which are wrongs that Christianity rebukes as clearly as it does slavery or defalcation, and wrongs that Christian men must speedily remedy, or else cease to be Christians, and well-nigh cease to be men.

For the wrongs that remain to her position, and the disabilities that man's too selfish and partially Christianized nature has not yet removed, let her not, in the name of all that is lovely and all that is skilful, go to separatist conventions, nor to the platform, nor to the novel schemes of political economy, or social re-organization; but to that moral tribunal, where she is as sure to win her cause at last as the sunlight is to compel a summer. Let her take up and wield the spiritual sovereignty that is her everlasting birthright. Let her understand—what so few of her sex have been willing to learn to this hour—the power lodged in her whole spirit and voice and look and action for or against the kingdom of Heaven. Let her be content with the possession and exercise of power, in all its higher forms, without that appendage which unhalloved pride is for ever insisting on—the *name* of it. Let her unfold every nobler faculty that our imperfect social state invites; and then be sure that the social state will ripen into more perfect humanities, and full justice come at last. Let her be the brave domestic advocate of every virtue, the silent but effectual reformer of every vice, the unflinching destroyer of falsehood, the generous patroness of intelligence, the watcher by slandered innocence, the guardian of childhood, the minister of Heaven to home, the guide of orphans, the sister of the poor, the disciple of Christ's holy Church. On Jesus of Nazareth,—all fails except for this,—on the Saviour's heart, let her rest her unchangeable and unassailable hope, her unquestioning trust, her unconquerable love.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) Is it nothing for woman to remember, when her sex is made the type and tabernacle of Love, that we have ascribed the loftiest glory even to the Almighty Father when we have said that His name is Love? Is it nothing to her that her place in society and

her powers in the world correspond to her character? That while she shares with man, in honourable and often equal measure, certainly in these modern times, every intellectual privilege, literary accomplishment, and public function—authorship, the chair of science, the throne of state—she yet has a realm all her own, sacred to her peculiar ministry, where she reigns by a still diviner right? Is it nothing that it is her face which first bends over the breathing child, looks into his eyes, welcomes him to life, steadies his uncertain feet until they walk firmly on the planet? Suppose man were the natural enemy of woman; consider that from his birth, for the first ten years of his life, he is put into her hands, with scarcely a reservation or exception, to be impressed, moulded, fashioned into what she will,—so that, if he were born a wild tiger, her benignity would have its opportunity to tame him; consider that it has been historically demonstrated that scarcely a single hero, reformer, statesman, saint, or sage, has ever come to influence or adorn his age, from Jacob to Washington, who was not reared by a remarkable mother that shaped his mind; and then ask whether it is not equal folly for woman to claim the *name* of power, and for man to deny her the *possession*.

There is hardly a walk of public or private life where female talent is not heartily honoured, and does not command its deserved success. The fine arts, the sciences, classical learning, social reform, philosophy, education, empire,—all are represented at this day by accomplished women. Do they suffer detriment, or loss of influence, because they are women? Is Mrs. Somerville, or Miss Mitchell, less esteemed among the scientific minds of the age for her sex? Does not the whole British kingdom learn a heightened regard for woman from the womanly character it beholds in its Queen? Is there a department of knowledge from which woman is now, by our modern systems of education, shut out? Must it not be very soon true that her power shall be proportioned to her energy, and her influence be measured only by her merit? Probably the larger proportion of scholarship and public enterprise will still be with men—the providential constitution of the sexes justifies that expectation; but when exceptions appear, the demand of Christian liberty is, that they be welcomed, recognised and rewarded.—*Ibid.*

THE SERVANT OF GOD SUMMONED HOME.

(Verses 12-14.)

The intimation here given to Moses of his approaching death suggests the following observations:—

I. That sin is an evil of the greatest gravity.

The Lord here informs the great leader of Israel that he must shortly relinquish his charge and lay down his bodily life. But why must Moses die at this time? Not because he was worn out either physically or mentally: "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated;" and his splendid valedictory charge to the people shows that his mind had lost nothing either of force or of fire. Nor has he to die at this time because he has outlived his usefulness: he is still the most useful man of all the thousands of Israel. He has to die because of his sin "at the water of Meribah." "Ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes" (comp. chap. xx. 2-13, and see pp. 372, 373). Moses besought the Lord that he might be permitted to enter "the good land that is beyond Jordan;" but the Lord "would not hear" him (Deut. iii. 23-27). Thus God manifests His abhorrence of sin, and testifies to its heinousness. (a)

II. That God is the absolute Sovereign of human life.

This great truth is strikingly illustrated in the death of Moses. Neither from disease, nor from the exhaustion of the vital forces, nor from accident, nor from external violence, does the great and good man die; but because God wills his death. To the man who recognises and obeys God's laws, and seeks to live in harmony with His will, death cannot come either prematurely or accidentally. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my ap-

pointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth," &c. "Thou hast made my days as an hand-breath." "Thou turnest man to destruction," &c. "My times are in Thy hand." (b)

This sovereignty of God over our life should—

1. *Lead us to seek for conformity to His will.* Manifestly it is both our duty and interest so to do.

2. *Encourage us in the prosecution of worthy aims.* "Man is immortal till his work is done."

III. That inspiring visions are often granted to the good as they approach the close of their earthly career.

"The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel." It was in mercy that God permitted him to survey the goodly land. Vast and splendid was the prospect from the heights of Nebo. "Even the city of Heshbon itself, stood upon so commanding an eminence, that the view extended at least thirty English miles in all directions, and towards the south probably as far as sixty miles." As to Moses it was granted to behold the extent and beauty of the Promised Land before his death (Deut. xxxiv. 1-4), so the most glorious spiritual prospects are often vouchsafed to godly souls as they draw near the close of their pilgrimage. This was the case with Stephen: "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven," &c. (Acts vii. 55-60). And with Paul: "I am now ready to be offered," &c. (2 Tim. iv. 6-8). See p. 419. (c)

IV. That through the gates of death the good enter upon scenes of congenial social life.

"And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." See p. 379. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When Moses, instead of giving prompt and cheerful obedience to the command of God, yielded in an evil moment to the peevishness and the pettishness of his own temper, not only did he come short of the Divine purpose, and fail to glorify God in the sight of His people, but He became subject to serious privation and peculiar loss. As the punishment of his disobedience, he was precluded from entering the Promised Land. Though permitted to come to its very border, and though, from Pisgah's proud and lofty height, he was allowed to cast his eye over its fair and enchanting scenery, his feet never pressed its sacred soil, and ere his favoured nation had taken possession of the long-looked-for inheritance, his eyes were closed in death. Nothing is more natural than to suppose that after the toils and the strifes—the struggles and the sufferings of an arduous and devoted life, his heart thrilled with delight in the prospect of the earthly Canaan, and that it would have added much to the happiness of his old age had he been suffered to enter the good land, and there to have found a home and a grave. But this was denied to Him — *R. Ferguson, L.L.D.*

It seems certain that this death on Pisgah, and this sight of the Promised Land, was designed partly to humble and partly to gratify Moses; partly as a mortification, and partly as an honour; partly as a punishment and partly as a pleasure. It must have mortified him somewhat to be brought to the verge of the object of his long ambition and deep-felt desire, and then to have it removed out of his sight; to say to himself, "Not a child in all that camp, but is more favoured than I: never shall I cross that Jordan, or visit those sacred spots where my fathers lived, worshipped and died: I alone, amongst these millions, am denied this privilege." But, on the other hand, while Aaron was not permitted to behold that land, but died with the great and terrible wilderness around him, Moses saw its beauty, felt a breeze wafted from its balmy air upon his dying brow, and expired while embracing it, as it were in the arms of his love and admiration. He saw, too, on the other hand, his people compacted into a powerful community, girt and armed for the contest; pawing like a lion ere setting their terrible feet upon the enemies' soil, led by a man and warrior after his own heart, with the tabernacle of God in their midst, and the cloud of the pillar hovering over them, and this sight serves to give an additional consolation and joy to his departing spirit. What an honour, too, to be watched over and tended so carefully by the Most High! Moses stripped off Aaron's garments, and Eleazar assisted him; but the

whole circumstances of the scene at Pisgah were arranged by the hand of God. He breathed on His servant and gave him death.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 381, 382. (b)

(c) Privilege as well as punishment is often connected with the death of God's people, and He often proves how precious in His sight is the death of His saints, by giving them in their last moments bursts of insight and glimpses of glory. Moses was alone on the mount at the time, and perhaps he was the only man, at all events the only eminent saint of God, who on the literal Pisgah ever died. But the path to the spiritual Pisgah is well-worn, and many a pious soul has found it a Mount Clear, and seen from it a little of the "glory of the land." . . . Words of rapture, of calm and sober yet profound and thrilling joy, have come forth from the lips of the departing children of God. Biography teems with these. How the martyred reformers and covenanters died, each of them with some cheering Scripture word, like a scroll of glory, on his lips, such as, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly;" "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ;" "None but Christ; none but Christ." The famous Thomas Halyburton lay for weeks on his death-bed, and it seemed to have been uplifted by the hands of angels nearer to heaven as he lay upon it, and breathed out his ardent soul in words of ecstasy. In later times we find a Payson speaking of the "Sun of Righteousness becoming larger, brighter, and broader to his soul as he was drawing nigh it;" a Hall crying, "I have a humble hope, which I would not exchange for all worlds;" the young and lovely Mrs. Shepherd, whose interest in his salvation almost melted the heart of Byron himself, saying, as she lay a dying, "God's happiness, God's happiness," words which seemed to mean, "That is the only happiness deserving the name, and I am going to inherit it above;" and the great Coleridge, who amidst many aberrations of intellect and life died at last a meek disciple of Jesus, and dictated on his death-bed these lines as his epitaph:—

"Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame,

He asked and hoped through Christ—do thou the same."

These persons were verily in their last hours exalted to one or other of the peaks of Pisgah, and received extraordinary testimonies of the presence and favour of God.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations on this point, see p. 420. (b)

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 382. (c)

A MODEL ORDINATION SERVICE.

(Verses 15-23.)

In this paragraph there are several things which deserve notice.

i. *The solicitude of Moses for the carrying on of God's work.* This was his great concern when he knew that the time of his departure was at hand. "Moses spake unto the Lord saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits," &c. (vers. 15-17).

ii. *The noble unselfishness of Moses.* He does not seek the appointment of one of his sons as his successor. Already the high priesthood has been settled in the family of Aaron, and it would have been a very natural thing if Moses had asked that one of his sons might succeed him in his office; but he leaves the appointment entirely with the Lord.

iii. *The directions of the Lord for the ordination of the successor of Moses* (vers. 18-21).

iv. *The carrying out of these directions by Moses* (vers. 22, 23).

Although the ordination of Joshua was to the office of chief magistrate, yet we may regard it as illustrating a Model Ordination Service to the Christian Ministry. What an interesting ordination service this was! With Canaan so near, and the great leader so soon to pass away, and the recollections of the sinful strife at Meribah and of his sin there, which caused his passing away at this time, so clear—this service must have been deeply impressive. What a charge Moses would give! And how solemn would it be to Joshua as he pondered on the reason why Moses was leaving them then! And how full of instruction and warning to the congregation!

In our day an ordination is regarded by some as merely a thing of ecclesiastical etiquette; and by others as a kind of religious banquet, at which able men will preach eloquent sermons, and an intellectual and emotional feast will be provided. Let us correct such notions

by the consideration of this ordination, the directions for which were given by God. This ordination suggests—

I. That the person ordained should be chosen of God for his work.

Moses asked the Lord to "set a man over the congregation," &c. (verses 16, 17). "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua," &c. So now the Christian minister should be—

1. *Called by God to His work.* (a)

2. *Appointed by God to his sphere of work.* As the Head of the Church, Christ is deeply concerned in the selection and appointment of its ministers. He both calls His under-shepherds, and appoints them their spheres. The minister himself should feel that he holds his commission and appointment from the Lord. Such a conviction will be to Him an inspiration and strength, &c.

There is one distinguishing characteristic in every man whom God calls; they are all, like Joshua, men "in whom is the Spirit." They are endowed by God with the spiritual qualifications for the discharge of their sacred duties. The Divine call and the Divine qualification are invariably associated. (b)

II. That the ordination is to the most important work.

Joshua was ordained to preside over the Israelites and direct them in all their affairs. "Set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them," &c.

How unspeakably important are the duties of the Christian minister! It is his to publish the glad tidings, to instruct the people of his charge, to counsel, to warn, to rebuke, to encourage, &c. (c)

" 'Tis not a cause of small import

The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled a Saviour's hands."

—Doddridge.

III. That the ordination should be conducted by tried men.

Joshua was ordained by Moses alone. But in the ordination of Timothy, Paul was assisted by the elders of the Church (1 Tim. iv. 14). The cases were different. Joshua was to be chief magistrate; but Timothy was ordained to a purely spiritual ministry. The forms of government also were much altered. Moses's time joined on to the days of patriarchal government; but it was far otherwise in Paul's day. But in both cases they were proved men, men of experience and of good reputation, holy and honoured men. So should it ever be in ordinations to the Christian ministry.

IV. The ordination should be accompanied with the imposition of hands.

"Take thee Joshua . . . and lay thine hand upon him." This was done as a sign of the transference of the government to him, and of the conference of the Holy Ghost upon him. "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv. 9). The imposition of hands is a natural and impressive form for the expression of benediction; and seems to have been so used in all ages (comp. Gen. xlviii. 14; Matt. xix. 13, 15; Acts vi. 6; viii. 17; ix. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6. (d))

V. That the ordination should include a charge to the ordained.

"Give him a charge." The duties and responsibilities of the office should be laid before those who are being set apart to it; and the experience of godly and approved men should be made available for the direction of the inexperienced. What wise and inspiring things Moses would say to Joshua in this charge! What sage counsels drawn from his ripe experience, &c.! Nothing is more natural and becoming than to give a charge to any one entering upon new and solemn relationships and duties. The parent gives a charge to his son as he goes forth from home to the battle and burden of life, &c. The veteran who has been in many a battle

is well able to counsel the recent recruit, who is about to gird on the armour for the first time.

VI. That the ordination should be conducted in the presence of the people.

"Set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight." The Christian minister should be ordained in the presence of the congregation, because the office to which he is being set apart is one involving mutual obligations. Moreover, such an arrangement—

1. *Is more impressive to the person being ordained.* There present with him are the immortal souls for whom he has to live and labour.

2. *Tends to influence the people beneficially.* As they hear of the important duties and solemn responsibilities of their minister, they should be awakened to deeper solicitude and more earnest prayer on his behalf, and to heartier co-operation with him. (e)

VII. The ordination should confer honour upon the person ordained.

"Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (comp. Deut. xxxiv. 9).

To serve God in the ministry of redemptive truth is a great honour, even to the holiest and ablest of men—to be an "ambassador for Christ," &c. (f) But in addition to this, when a number of experienced and honoured ministers, who know the person they are about to "lay hands on," unite to ordain him "before all the congregation," by that act they declare that they, knowing him, regard him as a fit and proper person for the holy office of the Christian minister; and so they put of their honour upon him, that the people of his charge may have ampler ground for respecting and trusting him. For this reason, those who take the chief duties in an ordination service should be personally acquainted with him whom they ordain.

VIII. That a person so chosen of

God, should seek special direction from Him, and seeking, shall obtain it.

"And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest," &c. (ver. 21). The general principle here suggested we take to be this,—that every man who is called of God to special responsibilities, should seek and shall obtain special help to fit him for those responsibilities. That such was the case with the Apostles, we see from Matt. xxviii. 18-20; John xiv. 26; and xvi. 12, 13. This should serve—

1. *As a warning against self-sufficiency.* The great Apostle of the Gentiles writes, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves," &c. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). Again he asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

2. *As a source of encouragement and strength.* We have access to the infinite resources of the Most High God. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c. "Our sufficiency is of God," &c. (g).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 23 (a), 50 (c), and 326 (a).

(b) For illustrations on ministerial qualifications, see pp. 328, 329.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 62 (c) and (b).

(d) The laying-on of hands had been, from the time when Moses was directed to lay hands upon Joshua, the regular recognized manner of appointing to an office in the Church of God; and it was just adopted by the Christian Church from having prevailed by God's own command in the Jewish. It is of course a significant appointment; an appointment signifying the delegation of authority to do that which the person appointing is empowered thus to appoint another to perform. Further than that we cannot say respecting it. It is accompanied always with prayer: and the laying-on of hands would probably be considered to denote that that which was applied for in the prayer was granted to the prayer and conveyed to the person appointed. That would seem to be the explanation of the gesture in thus appointing, in the simplicity of the primitive Church.—*H. Alford, D.D.*

(e) It is a popular error to suppose that a gig can go on one wheel. The minister must have the co-operation of his hearers. They must be workers together. The minister cannot beg, and organize, and visit, and preach, and preside—get up bazaars, establish societies, collect for chapel debts, tell anecdotes at sewing meetings, and reconcile all the differences which arise between two-and-ninence and half-a-crown. He is called to preach the Gospel—work enough for the strongest powers! Let him be encouraged and honoured in his holy vocation.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(f) Let those who sustain the character of Christian ministers, think what a Master they serve, and in how great a work they are engaged! How little all the titles which the princes of this world can give must appear, when compared with that of the ministers of Jesus, and a servant of God, in the salvation of souls! How low the employments of secular life are, even those in which the nobles and kings of the earth are engaged, in comparison with theirs!—*Philip Doddridge, D.D.*

(g) Brothers! "our sufficiency is of God." Let us betake ourselves to the "throne of the heavenly grace," for our strength must be maintained by prayer. The suppliant leaves the altar clothed with power; the breath of his own prayer is returned into his spirit as an inspiration from heaven. The hope of the ministry is in PRAYER. To the devout mind, the sacred page is lighted with unearthly splendour; on the prayerful intellect, the noblest thoughts alight in their descent from the Eternal Intelligence; on the contrite heart, God bestows the most enriching bliss. Minister of Christ! wouldst thou study profitably? *Pray much.* Wouldst thou preach with soul-arousing energy? *PRAY MUCH.* Wouldst thou edify the believer, reclaim the wanderer, abash the blasphemer, and thrill the indifferent? *PRAY MUCH.* "Them that honour Me I will honour." The pulpit of the prayerful minister will be the scene of most brilliant conquest,—from it will stream the banner of glorious triumph; and instead of appropriating the honour to himself, the minister will exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

"THE GOD OF THE SPIRITS OF ALL FLESH."*

(Verse 16.)

"The God of the spirits of all flesh."

Various ways in which we become impressed by Scripture with a sense of the value of the soul—histories of Scripture—promises of Scripture—great transactions of Scripture—Redemption. Now let us learn the same lesson by contemplating the powers of the soul itself, especially in its connection with God.

Our text brings God and man together—spirits and the God of spirits.

I. The affecting view here furnished of the agency and dominion of God in connection with the human mind.

It is affecting. The power of other agents extends chiefly to the body. The oppressor holds the body bound; but knows not what a range the spirit takes unconscious of a chain.

1. *God imparts the powers of the spirit.* We have nothing self-derived. "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." But what is spirit? Of its essence we know nothing—only its properties. We know only the properties and attributes of matter,—hard, soft; hot, cold; wet, dry; resistance, &c.

So of the spirit—by its properties, powers, affections. I see that God has made it like Himself—a being of intellectual order; capable of knowledge, wisdom, devotion; and, like its Author, capable of communicating its own happiness and impressions; and especially, like its Author, capable of purity.

2. *He claims the affections of the spirit.*

3. *He heals the disorders and sympathises with the sorrows of the spirit.*

4. *He alone can constitute the happiness of the spirit.*

5. *He will decide upon the future destiny of the spirit.*

II. The moral uses of these contemplations.

1. *Let them teach you reverence for the human mind.*

2. *Let them impress you with thoughts of the vast importance of personal religion.*

3. *Let it inspire you with practical efforts to benefit and bless society.* By education—by missions, &c.

4. *Let it kindle hope for the prospects of the human race.*—*Samuel Thodey.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this and the next chapter the laws for the ordering of the worship of the people in their sacrifices and on their great festivals, most of which had been given already, are completed and presented in regular order. During the wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites could not have carried out fully so elaborate a system of ceremonial worship. And now, with their settlement in Canaan so near, the whole law for their sacrificial worship is appropriately promulgated.

Verses 3-8 (comp. Exod. xxix. 38, 42).

Verse 7. *Strong wine.* וַיִּשְׂכֶּם = strong drink. It is perhaps used here for יַיִן = wine.

Verses 9, 10. The Sabbath-offering, now first commanded.

Verses 11-15. The offering at the new moons, also now first commanded. The observance of the new moon had been enjoined before (chap. x. 10); but now the offerings are specified for the first time.

* For another homiletic sketch and illustrations on this text see pp. 302-305.

Verses 16-25 (comp. Exod. xii. 3-28; xiii. 3-10; Lev. xxiii. 4-8; chap. ix. 1-5; and see pp. 139-143).

Verses 26-31 (comp. Lev. xxiii. 15-22; Deut. xvi. 9-12).

Most of the Homiletic topics suggested by this chapter have already been dealt with in "*The Preacher's*

Comm."; some of them in the work on Exodus, and others in our own work on this book. On the significance of the different kinds of offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116; on the Passover, see pp. 139-143; and on the relations and proportions between different kinds of offerings, see pp. 271-279.

THE MORNING AND EVENING SACRIFICES.

(Verses 1-8.)

These directions for the daily worship of the Israelites suggest—

I. Our daily need of consecration to God.

This is suggested by the burnt offering, which was designed to express the entire devotion of the offerer himself to the Lord.

1. *This personal consecration was claimed by God.* "My offering, and My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season."

2. *This personal consecration was made by man.* By offering the continual burnt offering, the Israelites symbolically expressed the surrender of themselves to the service of God. Keil and Del.: "In the daily burnt offering the congregation of Israel, as a congregation of Jehovah, was to sanctify its life, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord its God." Every morning we need to devote ourselves afresh to God, to seek His accepting and sanctifying grace, &c. "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1).

II. Our daily need of atonement with God.

The burnt offering sometimes expressed the idea of expiation as well as consecration. Thus Dr. Outram observes: "As burnt offerings are said in the Scriptures to 'make atonement' (Lev. i. 4; xiv. 20, 31) for those by whom they were offered, hence the Jews consider this class of victims as expiating certain kinds of sins." In the

"continual burnt offering" "the idea of expiation was subordinate to that of consecrating surrender to the Lord," but it was present in the offering, and it suggests our continual need of the atoning efficacy of our Saviour's blood. As our daily imperfections and sins tend to produce estrangement from God, so we daily need the reconciling influences of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

(a)

III. Our daily need of prayer to God.

"Of the daily burnt offerings Abarinel says: 'The daily burnt offerings were intended as a species of solemn supplications presented to God, that He would be pleased to remember His mercy towards Israel morning and evening, that He would increase their corn, and wine, and oil: as is evident from the meat offering and drink offering which were to accompany them.' . . . After the Jews were deprived of the opportunity of sacrificing, the Sanhedrim decreed, that instead of the stated sacrifices they should offer stated prayers; evidently considering the design of sacrifices and prayers as one and the same."—*Outram*.

Our daily necessities should lead to our daily prayers. Here are some of our daily needs—

1. *Forgiveness of sin.* Sins of omission or commission, sins secret or open, mark our daily life; and cause us to need daily forgiveness. (b)

2. *"Grace to help."* Daily we need direction in difficulties and perplexities, and strength in our weakness; both

bodily and spiritual supplies are a constant necessity with us. (c)

3. *Protection from dangers both to body and to soul.* There are bodily perils visible and invisible, from accident and disease, &c. There are spiritual perils from corrupt social influences, from spiritual adversaries, &c. Hence our need of Divine guardianship. (d)

4. *Renewal of spiritual strength.* As

in the body there are daily waste and exhaustion which have to be repaired by food and rest; so have we need daily of that spiritual renewal which is obtained by the exercise of prayer and other means of grace. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c.

Let us every day offer to God our morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) See an illustration on this point, by Dr. Parker, on p. 356.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 338 (c).

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 409 (b).

(d) It is a blessed state of heart to wait upon God continually in the spirit of humble, fervent, believing prayer. Satan well knows the value of such a spirit, and therefore tries hard to prevent its exercise. He labours to extinguish this sacred fire, kindled in the soul by the Holy Ghost. He endeavours to disturb the mind, to ride upon the wings of the imagination, and to fill the soul with an endless succession of fleeting images: this daily irruption of the enemy constitutes no small part of the Christian warfare.—*Gleanings.*

(e) This morning and evening sacrifice should direct us how and when to worship God; we must remember Him in the morning and in the evening; He must be in our thoughts first and last; we must begin the day and end the day with Him. Let Him be in our first meditations, when we awake out of sleep. If the heart and thoughts be well settled in the morning, they are like to be better ordered and disposed all the day after. This made the prophet say, "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning," &c. (Psa. v. 3; and xxii. 2; lv. 17; cxix. 55, 62, 164; Dan. vi. 10). Then are the faculties of the soul most fresh and cheerful, then are the senses comforted and refreshed, because of the night's rest, and there-

fore best able to perform any duty to God or man. Again, the morning is a time wherein the world, and the business of this life, have not yet forestalled and possessed our hearts and affections, and therefore we are then the most fit to perform any special or spiritual duty required of us. Lastly, it is the first part of the day, and therefore the most worthy to be consecrated to God, after we have newly tasted His great mercy in the night past, which He might have made everlasting darkness unto us, and never raised us up again. Moreover, as the greatest part neglect this time, so do they also at evening; they forget what blessings they have received, what dangers they have escaped, what temptations they have resisted, what wants they have obtained, what decays they have supplied and repaired, for which they should give Him thanks; and, lastly, what sins they have committed for which He might justly destroy them. They remember not to cast themselves upon His protection; they consider not that He might make their bed their grave, and never bring them to see the light and the sun again.—*W. Attersoll.*

They know little of their own wants and emptiness, who are not much in prayer; and they know little of the greatness and goodness of God, who are not much in praise. The humble Christian hath a heart, in some measure framed to both. He hath within him the best schoolmaster, who teaches him how to pray, and how to praise, and makes him delight in the exercise of them both.—*Gleanings.*

THE OFFERINGS OF THE SABBATH AND OF THE NEW MOONS; OR SEASONS OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE.

(Verses 9-15.)

In addition to the two lambs, which were to be offered daily for "a continual burnt offering," on the Sabbath-day two lambs, with their meat offering and

their drink offering, were to be offered as "the burnt offering of every Sabbath." And at the beginning of every month two young bullocks, one ram, and seven

lambs, with their meat offerings and drink offerings, were to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering, beside the continual burnt offering.

Moreover, during the Sabbath all temporal and bodily labours were suspended. And at the new moon they rested from their secular occupations (Amos viii. 5, 6); they feasted (1 Sam. xx. 5); they blew the trumpets (chap. x. 10); and heard from the prophets the word of God (2 Kings iv. 23).

What was the reason of these observances? Why were they instituted? We suggest, because that *in addition to the ordinary daily discharge of religious duties, man needs seasons more especially for religious exercises and occupations.* (a) This need will appear if we consider—

I. The tendency of material and temporal things to engross our attention and regard.

The things of this life and of this world,—present, visible, and tangible—very generally receive much more than their meed of thought and concern and effort. The temptation to worldliness is perhaps more continuous and more subtle than to any other evil. Hence we need seasons which call our mind and heart to spiritual and eternal things. (b)

II. The supreme importance of spiritual things.

Our Lord taught that the soul of man is of more value to him than the whole world. "What is a man profited if he gain?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). The immense worth of the soul may be gathered from its nature, its capacities and powers, and its duration. If it be engrossed in worldly things it is degraded, and will be ruined, lost. It needs to be occupied in the pursuit of truth, holiness, love, beneficence, for in this pursuit it finds its true development and blessedness. And these high things are the real, the permanent, and the priceless things.

Hence the importance of those seasons which call the mind and heart to the contemplation and cultivation of these things.

III. That spiritual engagements and exercises are indispensable to the healthy existence and activity of the spiritual in man.

In human nature, until it is renewed by the Holy Spirit, the spiritual elements are not vital and vigorous. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," &c. "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal." Even after a man "is born of the Spirit," he must exercise his spiritual powers, must "walk in the spirit," or their vitality will decline. Activity is an essential condition of spiritual health and progress. The spiritual life needs culture, training, and action. For these reasons we argue the importance of special times and seasons for religious engagements and exercises.

Many of these seasons of special religious observance have passed away, the end for which they were instituted having been accomplished. But the Lord's day, the successor in a certain sense of the Jewish Sabbath, with its duties and privileges, remains as a priceless boon to mankind. Never were its physical rest and its spiritual associations and occupations more needed than in this age. Let us prize the day; let us use it wisely and well. "Every day," says Trapp, "should be a Sabbath to the saints, in regard of ceasing to do evil, learning to do well; but on the seventh-day-Sabbath our devotions should be doubled. The whole Sabbath should be spent in God's service. Psalm xcii., titled, 'A Psalm for the Sabbath,' mentions morning and evening performances (verse 2). Variety of duties may very well take up the whole day with delights. Besides, God gives us six whole days. Now, to sell by one measure and buy by another, is the way to a curse." (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A man who does not pray usually, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray especially. Who would care to live in a miser's house who starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly, and only abounding in it on particular occasions, when ostentation rather than sincerity may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table, sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times; and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God, select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers—

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

—*William Wordsworth.*

For another illustration on this topic, see p. 426 (c).

(c) I certainly do feel by experience the eternal obligation, because of the eternal necessity, of the Sabbath. The soul withers without it; it thrives in proportion to the fidelity of its observance. Nay, I even believe the stern rigour of the Puritan Sabbath had a grand effect upon the soul. Fancy a man thrown in upon himself, with no permitted music, nor relaxation, nor literature, nor secular conversation—nothing but his Bible, his own soul, and God's silence! What hearts of iron this system must have made. How different from our stuffed-arm-chair religion and "gospel of comfort"! as if to be made comfortable were the great end of religion. I am persuaded, however, that the Sabbath must rest not on an enactment, but on the necessities of human nature. It is necessary, not because it is commanded; but it is commanded because it is necessary. If the Bible says, "Eat the herb of the field," self-sustenance does not become a duty in consequence of the enactment, but the enactment is only a statement of the law of human nature. And so with the Sabbath.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A., "Life and Letters."*

On pp 285, 286, will be found other extracts illustrative of this topic.

THE FIRST SACRAMENT OF THE YEAR.

(Verse 11.)

"And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord."

It is always advantageous to look back upon the Gospel of the Old Testament, as well as upon the Gospel of the New. Good to light our torch at their fire; good amidst the meridian effulgence of the Gospel to look back upon the early twilight of the Law—since all tends to heighten our sense of present privilege and of present obligation. Our text enables us to do this.

We may well apply the language of our text to the first Sacrament of the year.

I. That approach to God through a sacrifice of His own appointing has always been the privilege of His devoted people.

Four of these sacrifices are here described: daily (vers. 3-8); weekly (vers. 9, 10); monthly (vers. 11-15); yearly at Passover (vers. 16-25), and at Pentecost (vers. 26-31). Concerning each observe—

1. *The authority by which it was prescribed.* "Command the children of Israel" (ver. 2). It was not left to option. This is His commandment. Nothing was to be done on Moses's authority: everything was in God's name. So of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth," &c. (Rom. iii. 25). "Him hath God exalted," &c. (Acts v. 31). Whatever is done in God's service must be done by His direction; for God's Church and instituted religion are more precious than all the world beside.

2. *The peculiar interest which God took in them.* "My offering, My bread for My sacrifices, a sweet savour unto Me." The wine was to be "poured unto the Lord." God sets a high value upon all the means and offices which bring the soul near to Himself; and we should do so too.

3. *The typical end and design of all* was by these various means to prepare for the coming of Christ, and to conduct the soul to Him.

"The precious blood of Christ"—precious in the sight of God for its infinite value; precious to the conscience of the convinced sinner for its purifying virtue; precious to the accepted believer for its blessings; precious to all around the throne, who are there alone through its virtue.

II. That there are some seasons in which the mind is aroused to a special contemplation of the great atonement.

"The beginnings of your months." We may fitly apply this to the *beginning of the year*. God marks the flight of time. "God requireth that which is past." And it quite accords with our feeling that the Sabbaths of the year should commence with a service expressly directing us to the Cross of Christ.

1. *Look back upon the sins and shortcomings of the year past*; and let this be a motive to a more full and direct application "to the blood of sprinkling." "In those sacrifices there is a remem-

brance again of sins every year." Look upon the sins of your holy duties, of your religious acts, of your sacramental services. It was not in vain that the sacrifice was doubled on the Sabbath.

2. *Look forward to the duties, trials, and enjoyments of the coming year*; and then see the influence of pardon and acceptance, softening the one, and heightening the other.

III. That in all our religious engagements we must have an immediate respect to the presence and glory of Him whom we approach.

"Ye shall offer a burnt-offering unto the Lord." We have something to do with man; but everything to do with God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Think of this—

1. *To give solemnity to your spirit.* "God is greatly to be feared," &c. (Psa. lxxxix. 7). "Put off thy shoes," &c. (Exod. iii. 5).

2. *To give confidence to your faith.* "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22). "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James i. 6).

3. *To give earnestness and simplicity to your prayers.*

IV. That we are looking forward to a world in which no repetition of these sacrifices and no renewal of these instructions will be required.

. Samuel Tholey.

THE OFFERINGS OF THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.

(Verses 16-25.)

The institution and observation of the Passover have received full consideration in "*The Hom. Comm.*" on Exod. xii. and xiii. 1-10. The subject has also been briefly treated on pp. 139-143

of this work. It does not seem desirable to take up the subject again. On the significance of the various offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST; OR, MAN'S CELEBRATION OF THE GOODNESS
OF GOD IN HARVEST.

(Verses 26-31.)

This festival was called "the feast of harvest" (Exod. xxiii. 16), "the feast of weeks" (Deut. xvi. 10), and the feast of Pentecost, because it was observed fifty days after the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, 16). The most important passages of Scripture relating to it, in addition to the text, are Lev. xxiii. 15-22, and Deut. xvi. 9-12.

Jewish writers in modern times generally regard this festival as the commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; but we do not find this taught in the Scriptures. Moreover, we shall not attempt here to indicate all the homiletic suggestions of this feast, but simply those connected with our subject, *Man's celebration of the goodness of God in harvest.*

I. The goodness of God to man calls for religious celebration from man.

By Divine command one day is here set apart for joyful acknowledgment of the goodness of God in the grain-harvest. The celebration was to be marked by—

1. *Rest from worldly labours.* "Ye shall do no servile work" (comp. Exod. xii. 16).

2. *Assembling for religious service.* "Ye shall have an holy convocation." In the days of the Apostles, as we learn from Acts ii. 1, 5-11, many Jews came from foreign countries to celebrate this feast.

3. *Rejoicing in the blessing of God upon their labours.* "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God" (Deut. xvi. 10, 11). It was a joyous occasion. "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest." Joyous worship honours God, and is acceptable to Him. God's goodness to us should be gratefully and gladly celebrated by us. (a)

"O bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die."—Watts.

II. The goodness of God to man calls for confession of man's sin to God.

At this harvest festival a sin offering was to be made to God. "One kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you." But now that Jesus Christ hath made "His soul an offering for sin," we have no need to bring a "kid to make an atonement." Yet the principles involved in the offering remain.

1. *God's goodness should deepen our impression of our sin.* It should remind us of our unworthiness, and ill-desert. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

2. *The deeper impression of our sin should lead us to exercise increased faith in the Great Sacrifice for sin.* "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14). (b)

III. The goodness of God to man calls for the thanksgiving of man to God.

Pentecost was a festival of thanks for the harvest. Such a festival involved—

1. *Acknowledgment of dependence upon God.* It is He who giveth "us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (c)

2. *Expression of gratitude to God.* The "new meat-offering unto the Lord" (verse 26), the two wave loaves of leavened bread of fine flour (Lev. xxiii. 17), and the "two sheep of a year old for a sacrifice of peace-offerings" (Lev. xxiii. 19), were all designed to express the thankful homage of the people to God. The blessings of God to us should lead us heartily to enquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (d)

IV. The goodness of God to man calls for the consecration of man to God.

"Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord; two young bullocks," &c. (verses 27-29, 31).

The principal meaning of the burnt-offering was the self-dedication of the offerer. Two observations are suggested—

1. *Man's consecration to God should be complete.* The burnt-offering was completely consumed on the altar to the honour of God. So man should dedicate himself unreservedly to God. And the blessings bestowed by God on man should impel him to do so. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1). (e)

2. *Man's complete consecration to God*

is acceptable to Him. "Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord" (see pp. 272, 273).

V. The goodness of God to man calls for goodness from man to his fellowman.

At the harvest festival God called man to liberality and hospitality; to show kindness to the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Lev. xxiii. 22; Deut. xvi. 11). The kindness of God to us should constrain us to show kindness to each other, especially to the poor, &c. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) An extract illustrative of this point will be found on p. 118 (c).

(b) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(c) This topic is illustrated on p. 276 (b) and (c).

(d) And this topic is illustrated on p. 276 (a).

(e) Self-consecration is illustrated on pp. 93 (a) and (b), 101 (b) and (c), 117 (b), and 344 (c).

(f) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 117 (a), and 343 (a) and (b).

CHAPTER XXIX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have directions concerning three great annual religious occasions, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each of these had been previously instituted; and the chief reason of their mention here is for the enumeration of the sacrifices to be offered upon each occasion. The chief treatment of the topics which these occasions suggest will be found in other volumes of *The Preacher's Commentary*, chiefly in that upon *Leviticus*. And as we have already explained the moral significance of the different kinds of sacrifice (see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116), and

considered the relations and proportions between them (see pp. 271-279), the chapter only requires brief treatment from us.

Vers. 1-6. The Feast of Trumpets and its offerings (comp. Lev. xxiii. 24, 25; chap. x. 1-10; and see pp. 156-160).

Vers. 7-11. The great Day of Atonement and its offerings (comp. Lev. xvi.; xxiii. 26-32).

Vers. 12-40. The Feast of Tabernacles and its offerings (comp. Exod. xxiii. 16,—“the Feast of Ingathering;” Lev. xxiii. 34-36, 39-43; Deut. xvi. 13-15; xxxi. 10-13).

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS: HOW TO BEGIN A NEW YEAR.

(Verses 1-6.)

The Feast of Trumpets is “the feast of the new moon, which fell on the first of Tizri. It differed from the ordinary

festivals of the new moon in several important particulars. It was one of the seven days of Holy Convocation.

Instead of the mere blowing of the trumpets of the Temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices, it was 'a day of blowing of trumpets.' In addition to the daily sacrifices and the eleven victims offered on the first of every month, there were offered a young bullock, a ram, and seven lambs of the first year, with the accustomed meat offerings, and a kid for a sin offering. The regular monthly offering was thus repeated, with the exception of one young bullock." Let us notice—

i. *The time of the celebration.* "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month." The seventh month was called by the Jews in later times Tizri, but in the Old Testament Ethanim (1 Kings viii. 2). Tradition unanimously affirms it to have been the first month of the civil year. Religious celebrations were more numerous in this month than in any of the others. "It formed," says Scott, "a kind of vacation between the harvest and the ensuing seed-time; and these solemnities during that season might intimate, that the ordinances of God are the rational refreshment from the fatigue of business; and that religion does not at all interfere with our true interest even in this world." (a)

ii. *The meaning of the celebration.* "There seems to be no sufficient reason to call in question the common opinion of Jews and Christians, that it was the festival of the New Year's Day of the civil year, the first of Tizri, the month which commenced the Sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Taking this view of its meaning, we regard the paragraph before us as illustrating *the manner in which we should begin a New Year.*

I. With special attention to religious duties and privileges.

This day was to be marked by rest from ordinary labours, and by a religious assembly. "Ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you." Additional sacrifices were to be offered on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet

savour unto the Lord," &c. (vers. 2-5). And there were to be in addition to "the burnt offering of the month," &c. (ver. 6). It is eminently appropriate to enter upon a new year with religious meditation, and by offering to God the sacrifices of praise and prayer and of beneficence to man. The assembling in "holy convocation" also is as becoming in us, and as helpful to us, as it was to the Israelites. (b)

II. With humble confession of sin and prayer for pardon.

The Israelites were to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for them" (ver. 5). See p. 115. And in entering upon a new year it is wise to seriously review our past lives, to mark where we have rebelled against the holy will of God, how often and sadly we have failed in our duty, &c.; to humbly acknowledge our sin unto God; and to seek forgiveness from Him through our Great Sin-Offering. In this way we should commence the year with our sins forgiven and our souls cleansed by the blood of Christ. (c)

III. With grateful acknowledgment of the Divine mercies.

The Israelites were commanded to offer a "meat-offering of flour mingled with oil," &c. (vers. 3, 4). The meat-offerings, like the peace-offerings, were eucharistic (see pp. 99, 116). How appropriate is it for us at the very beginning of the year to review the mercies of the past! Think of God's mercy in sparing our sinful lives; in forgiving our many aggravated offences; in sustaining us by the constant exercise of His power; in enriching us with countless gifts of His grace, &c. Let us reflect upon His mercy in all this until our heart grows warm with holy fire; and then let us pour out unto Him the offerings of our fervent gratitude. We are not fit to enter upon any year until we have heartily and devoutly blessed God for His great kindness to us in the past. (d)

IV. With complete consecration of ourselves to God.

"Ye shall offer a burnt offering for

a sweet savour unto the Lord," &c. (ver. 2). See pp. 98, 115, 116. An extra burnt offering was required from the Israelites, at the Feast of Trumpets. May we not infer from this that, at the commencement of the year, there are special reasons why we should consecrate ourselves to God, or renew such consecration, if it has already been made? We suggest as such reasons—

1. *"The multitude of His mercies"* to us. We have said that they should be reviewed at this time; and the review should lead to our self-consecration to Him. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (e)

2. *The abridgment of our opportunities.* The past years have borne away with them many opportunities of usefulness, &c. "Much of our time has run to waste." We ought to have

devoted ourselves to God long ago. "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," (f)

3. *The uncertainty of the future.* How many who commenced last year well and strong in body, were called away by death before its close!

"To-morrow, Lord, is Thine,
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand;
And if its sun arise and shine,
It shines by Thy command."

—Doddridge.

"Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

CONCLUSION.

i. *Let the people of God begin the year by renewed and more fervent devotion to Him.*

ii. *Let those who have not hitherto given themselves to Him do so at once, completely, and for ever.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The times of the festivals were evidently ordained in wisdom, so as to interfere as little as possible with the industry of the people. The Passover was held just before the work of harvest commenced, Pentecost at the conclusion of corn-harvest and before vintage, the Feast of Tabernacles after all the fruits of the ground were gathered in. In winter, when travelling was difficult, there were no festivals.—*S. Clark, M.A., in Bibl. Diet.*

(b) We stand in the first Sabbath of the new year. It is a time for review and contemplation. He is a genius at stupidity who does not think now. The old year died in giving birth to this: as the life of Jane Seymour, the English Queen, departed when that of her son, Edward VI., dawned. The old year was a queen, this is a king. The grave of the one and the cradle of the other are side by side.—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(c) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(d) In the dew drops that top every spike of grass, sow the sward with orient pearl, and hang like pendant diamonds, sparkling in the sun from all the leaves of the fescue, you see the multitude of His mercies. He crowns the year with His bounty. We have seen other streams dried up by the heat of summer, and frozen by the cold of winter—that of His mercies never. It has flowed on; day by day, night by night, ever flowing; and largely fed of heavenly showers, sometimes overflowing all its banks. To this, and that other one, has

the past brought afflictions? Still, may I not ask, how few our miseries to the number of our mercies: how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings? and even when He smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing of mercy as well as judgment; aye, much more of mercies than judgments? Let us not write the memory of these on water, and of those on the rock.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

(e) Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich recollections of His past lovingkindness; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread whereon saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have heard or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold Him fast evermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully; wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head, but do love Him, the blessed Son of God, your ever tender friend.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) Whatever the joy and peace of a Christian's death-bed, there will always be a feeling of regret that so little has been done, or rather so little attempted for Christ. And while

His firmament glows with the dawnings of eternity, and the melody of angels is just stealing on his ears, and the walls of the bright city bound his horizon—if one wish could detain him in the tabernacle of flesh, oh! it would not be the wish of tarrying with the weeping ones who cluster round his bed; and it would not be the wish of providing for children and superintending their education, or of perfecting some plan for their settlement in life: he knows that there is a Husband for the widow and a Father of the fatherless. The only wish which could put a check on his spirit as the plumes of its wing just feel the free air; it is that he might toil a little longer for Christ, and do at least some fraction more of His work before entering into the light of His presence. And what, then, is the reminding him that “now is his salvation nearer,” but the admonishing him that whilst thousands upon thousands are bowing down to the stock and the stone, and vice is enthroned on high places, and an unholy

covenant is made between evil spirits and evil men, to sweep from this globe the name of the believer, there is a swift lapsing of the period during which he may act out his vows of allegiance; that nerve and sinew, time and talent—all must be centred more fixedly than ever in the service of Christ; lest his dying day find him recreant or indolent, and he is summoned to depart ere he have done the little which with all his strenuousness he might possibly effect for the Lord and His kingdom.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

Some of you are spending your last January. You have entered the year, but you will not end it. Somewhere you will shut your eyes in the sleep that knows no waking. Other hands shall plant the Christmas-tree and shake the New Year's greeting. It will be joy to some, sorrow to others. I would leave in your ears five short words of one syllable each—“This year thou shalt die.”—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT; ITS MORAL SUGGESTIONS.

(Verses 7-11.)

The whole of the ceremonies of this day are described in Lev. xvi. Our business is to attend to the moral suggestions of the paragraph under present consideration.

I. That it is our duty to set apart some time for serious reflection upon our sins.

The Israelites were required to set apart this one day in every year for the special remembrance of their sins, and for humiliation and atonement because of them. To seriously reflect upon our sins is a duty we owe—

1. *To ourselves.* Unless our sins be forgiven, they will prove our ruin; unless we sincerely repent of them, they will not be forgiven; unless we recognise and feel them, we cannot repent of them; and unless we consider our life in relation to them, we shall not recognise and feel them, for they are apt to escape our notice, and we are prone to overlook them, or to call them by soft names. Hence the need, &c.

2. *To God.* He calls upon us to consider our ways, to repent of our sins, to turn from them, &c. It is both our duty and interest at times to pause, examine our ways, &c. (a)

II. That reflection upon our sins should lead to humiliation because of them.

The day of atonement was sometimes called the “feast of humiliation” amongst the Jews, who upon it were required to humble themselves before God on account of their sins. Self-examination and reflection on our sins will be unproductive of any good result unless they lead to penitential sorrow because of them. Without true repentance the knowledge of sin tendeth to spiritual death rather than life. (b)

III. That humiliation because of our sins should lead to the mortification of our carnal appetites.

“Ye shall afflict your souls,” was one of the Divine commands to Israel concerning this day. “The expression to ‘afflict the soul,’ appears to be the old term for fasting; but its meaning evidently embraces, not only abstinence from food, but that penitence and humiliation which give scope and purpose to the outward act of fasting.”—*Speaker's Comm.* Fasting is good religiously only when bodily abstinence is an expression of spiritual penitence.

We do not affirm that fasting is a Christian duty. Even amongst the Jews, on this solemn day, children and sick people were exempt from the obligation. But it is the duty of the Christian to keep carnal passions under the control of spiritual principles, and not to allow bodily appetites to damp the ardour of spiritual aspirations. Thus did St. Paul: "I keep under my body," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 27; Gal. v. 24; Col. iii. 5, 6). (c)

IV. That true penitence leads to gratitude and personal consecration to God.

Special burnt-offerings, expressive of self-consecration, with their meat-offerings, expressive of thankfulness, were to be offered unto the Lord on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt offering," &c. (ver. 8-10). (d)

V. That our penitence, even when it is true in itself and in its expressions, is imperfect, and needs the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice.

The Israelites were commanded to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin-offering; beside the sin-offering of atonement," &c. (ver. 11). Our ap-

proaches to God in penitence and prayer and praise are defective and faulty. "Though we must not repent that we have repented, yet we must repent that we have not repented better."

VI. That the sacrifices of the ceremonial law were unable to take away sin.

The fact that in addition to the sin-offerings of the great ceremonies of this day (Lev. xvi.), another sin-offering was required, most impressively displays the insufficiency of the legal offerings, in themselves, to secure pardon and cleansing from sin for the offerers. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (comp. Heb. x. 1-18). "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (e)

Thus all the suggestions of this paragraph lead us up to our Lord and Saviour. He is the true hope of the penitent soul. He is the only and the all-sufficient Saviour from sin. Seek Him; trust in Him; live to Him.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We should weigh our own spirits. In the remembrance that our hearts are "deceitful above all things," we should, in that duty, go carefully and faithfully to work; not satisfied with a mere surface look; not regarding the word and the action merely, but jealously tracing each, as in the sight of God, to its secret source within; testing that source by the application of Bible criterions; desiring to detect not merely motives that are un-mixedly evil, but every secret adulteration of motives that are in the main good—every alloy—every deteriorating ingredient; "keeping our hearts with all diligence;" and looking forward to that day, when the equal balances of Heaven shall try—both in deed, and in principle and motive—"every man's work of what sort it is."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colours with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant colouring of delight. The glad news of the Gospel can only be printed on wet paper. Have you ever seen clearer shining than that which follows a

shower. Then the sun transforms the rain-drops into gems, the flowers look up with fresher smiles and faces glittering with their refreshing bath, and the birds from among the dripping branches sing with notes more rapturous, because they have paused awhile. So, when the soul has been saturated with the rain of penitence, the clear shining of forgiving love makes the flowers of gladness blossom all around. The steps by which we ascend to the palace of delight are usually moist with tears. Grief for sin is the porch of the House Beautiful, where the guests are full of "the joy of the Lord."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The flesh warreth against the spirit; and the enemy is never so effectually vanquished, as when he is reduced by famine. That hunger is not holiness we are ready to admit; but that it may easily be improved into a glorious mean or instrument of it, universal practice has asserted, and general experience confirmed. The prophet, therefore, does not barely say (Joel ii. 15-18), "proclaim a fast," but "sanctify," that is, hallow or render it holy; make it subservient to moral and religious purposes, by availing yourselves

of that humble, and serious, and recollected frame of mind, which bodily mortification has a natural tendency to produce; and let it lead you to godly sorrow, heartfelt repentance, and strenuous resolutions of immediate reformation.—*W. Bosfield.*

It is true that there is no direct and positive command given by Christ that you should abstain from animal and vegetable food, and the drinking of water; but lest the flesh-pampering man should be too eager to avail himself of this silence, or make a screen of such a supposed authority, I ought to say, that it is in full and manifold proof that such rational self-denial, accompanied with sincere faith and humility, has restrained the hand of the Lord from national judgments; and moreover, that although the practice of fasting degenerated into the Pharisaism of monkish austerities, it was observed by the Church of Christ in its simplest, purest, and healthiest estate; and that the more pious and holy of the followers of Jesus have left behind them strong testi-

monies to its value and efficacy.—*T. J. Judkin.*

The Church of God would be far stronger to wrestle with this ungodly age if she were more given to prayer and fasting. There is a mighty efficacy in these two Gospel ordinances. The first links us to heaven, the second separates us from earth. Prayer takes us into the banqueting house of God; fasting overturns the surfeiting tables of earth. Prayer gives us to feed on the bread of heaven, and fasting delivers the soul from being encumbered with the fulness of bread which perisheth. When Christians shall bring themselves up to the uttermost possibilities of spiritual vigour, then they will be able, by God's Spirit working in them, to cast out devils, which to day, without the prayer and fasting, laugh them to scorn.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Illustrations on this point will be found on pp. 93, 101, 117, 344.

(e) For an illustration on this point see p. 141 (b).

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES; ITS MEANING AND LESSONS.

(Verses 12-40.)

This institution is introduced here simply for the purpose of giving directions as to the offerings to be presented during the feast; and nothing is said of its origin, or design, &c. Notice—

i. *The number of the offerings prescribed.* The offerings required upon this occasion were far more numerous than those of any other festival. During the seven days of the feast, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs, and no less than seventy bullocks were sacrificed to the Lord; being twice as many rams and lambs, and five times as many bullocks, as were offered at the Feast of Passover; and in addition, on the eighth day were offered one bullock, one ram, and seven lambs.

ii. *The daily distribution of the offerings.* The arrangement as to the number of bullocks to be offered each day is peculiar. On the first day thirteen were to be offered, on the second day twelve, and so on, reducing the number by one each day, till on the seventh day seven were offered. This arrangement was instituted, and the total number was also fixed at seventy, probably to bring into prominence the number

seven, "the holy symbolical covenant number, by way of intimation that the mercies of the harvest accrued by virtue of God's covenant." Bishop Wordsworth, however, suggests "that the gradual evanescence of the law till the time of its absorption in the Gospel is here presignified in the law itself." And from the fact that at the solemnities of the eighth day, which closed the Feast, only one bullock was offered, Matthew Henry makes a similar suggestion: "It is hereby intimated to them that the legal dispensation should wax old, and vanish away at last; and the multitude of their sacrifices should end in one great sacrifice, infinitely more worthy than all of them."

Having repeatedly spoken of the general significance of these offerings, we proceed to notice briefly—

iii. *The meaning of this Festival.* From the fact that the Feast was celebrated in booths, and is always designated by this word (booths, Heb., *succoth*), Dean Stanley argues "that it did not commemorate the tents of the wilderness, but probably the 'booths' of the first start (*Succoth*, Lev. xxiii.

43; Exod. xiii. 20), the point of transition between the settled and the nomadic life." But this view attaches too great importance to the use of a word, and is not in harmony with the statements of the Scriptures as to the meaning of the Feast. We will endeavour to point out the meanings assigned to it in the Scriptures, and the corresponding lessons which it conveys to us.

I. It was a memorial of their emancipation from Egypt, teaching us that we should cherish the memory of former mercies.

That it was such a memorial appears from Lev. xxiii. 43, "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." "The tents of the wilderness furnished a home of freedom compared with the house of bondage out of which they had been brought." The remembrance of God's gracious dealings with us should be piously fostered by us.

1. *Gratitude urges to this.* To forget the kindnesses bestowed upon us is basely ungrateful.

2. *Reason urges to this.* The recollection of past mercies inspires confidence and hope in present difficulties and needs. To forget them is folly. (a)

II. It was a memorial of their life in the wilderness, reminding us that our present condition is that of strangers and pilgrims.

"And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, &c. That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 40-43). "Now the booth in which the Israelite kept the feast, and the tent which was his ordinary abode in the wilderness, had this in common—they were temporary places of sojourn, they belonged to camp life. The seven days of abode in the booths of the festival was thus a fair symbol of the forty years of abode in tents in the wilderness." It suggests, that "here have we no continuing city." We are

dwellers in tents, not in mansions. Life in this state is brief even at the longest. "Our days upon the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding." (b)

But the Feast was to commemorate the blessings of their life in the desert; blessings such as are given to us in our pilgrimage.

1. *Divine guidance.* "The Lord went before them," &c. "The pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day," &c. (Neh. ix. 19). The same is promised to us (Psa. xxxii. 8; Prov. iii. 6; Isa. lviii. 11). (c)

2. *Divine support.* "Forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness," &c. (Neh. ix. 21). And still He supports His people (Psa. lxxxiv. 11; Matt. vi. 25-34). (d)

3. *Divine protection.* The pillar of the cloud and of the fire was a protection. The Lord also made them victorious over their enemies. In our pilgrimage He defends us (John x. 28; Rom. viii. 31, 37-39; 1 Pet. iii. 13). (e)

III. It was a thanksgiving for rest and a settled abode in the Promised Land, suggesting the certainty and blessedness of the rest which remains for the people of God.

This aspect of the Feast is clearly expressed in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "No time in the year could be so suitable for the Israelites to be reminded of the wonderful Providence which had fed and sheltered them in the wilderness, where they had no land to call their own, and where there was neither harvest, nor gathering into barns, nor vintage, as the season in which they offered thanksgiving to Jehovah for the fruits of the ground, and consecrated the crops newly stored in. In this way the transition from nomadic to agricultural life, which took place when the people settled in the Holy Land, must have tended to fulfil the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. From that time the festival called to mind the long and weary wanderings in contrast with the plenty and comfort of settled possession." A compari-

son of Lev. xxiii. 40 with Rev. vii. 9, suggests that to the inspired Seer of Patmos the Feast of Tabernacles was a figure of the perfect rest and joy of heaven. Hengstenberg says that the "palms" of Rev. vii. 9, "are beyond doubt those of the feast of tabernacles." There are at least three points of analogy—

1. *Rest.* With this Feast all labour ceased, and winter, the period of rest, began. In heaven the Christian rests from his wanderings, rests from weary labours, rests from the struggle against sin, &c. (f)

2. *Reward.* At this Feast the Israelite had gathered in the entire harvest, had secured the reward of his labours. In heaven the Christian shall reap a rich reward for all his toils on earth, &c. (g)

3. *Rejoicing.* This was the most joyful of all the Jewish feasts. "They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest." The redeemed in heaven

have "entered into the joy of their Lord." (h)

IV. It was a thanksgiving for the completed harvest, teaching us to receive the precious fruits of the earth as the kind gifts of a bountiful Providence.

"The feast of ingathering, in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Exod. xxiii. 16). "When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days" (Lev. xxiii. 39). "Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine," &c. (Deut. xvi. 13-15). Learn from this, that in the harvest we should gratefully recognise the result of the blessing of God upon our labours. He giveth us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). See sketch on chap. xxviii. 26-31. (i)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) Illustrations on *Life, a Pilgrimage*, will be found on pp. 163, 409.

(c) This point is illustrated on pp. 152, 154, 164.

(d) Illustrations on *the dependence of man and the support of God* appear on pp. 154, 155, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(f) The rest of inaction is but the quiet of a stone, or the stillness of the grave, or the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they find the thing desired; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment; rest in the flow of joyful strength; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified. Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural, and necessary, as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest," not from

their works, but only "from their labours." It would be a labour for them not to work. To hush their music, and to stop their action, would be to them intolerable toil; they would be "weary with forbearing, and could not stay." So they "rest;" yet "they rest not day nor night."—*C. Stanford, D.D.*

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 420.

(g) An illustration on the *Rewards of heaven* appears on pp. 6, 7.

(h) For an illustration on the *Joys of heaven* see p. 169.

(i) There is a point at which we must give up and stand still, and say, "We can do no more." That is a matter of certainty in your common daily life; and out of it will come such reflections as these: I have nothing that has not upon it God's signature and superscription. I can work; but my work may come to nothing. I may sow my seed, but if He withhold the baptism of the dew and the rain, and the benediction of the sunlight, all my labour will come to nothingness, to mortification and pain! This must have some meaning. There must, in such a combination of circumstances as these, be a purpose which I ought to know, and understand, and work by. If a man once be started on that course of reflection, the probability is, that he who begins as a reverent inquirer, will end as a devout worshipper.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

HAPTER XXX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have regulations as to the force and obligatoriness of vows, with certain cases specified in which they ceased to be binding. Rules for the estimation of things vowed to the Lord had already been laid down in Lev. xxvii. The present chapter appropriately follows the laws regulating the sacrifices, inasmuch as vows frequently related to the offering of sacrifices.

Ver. 1. *Unto the heads of the tribes*, because the questions which are here dealt with would be brought before them for settlement.

Ver. 2. *A vow.* Heb., *neder*, "a positive vow, or promise to give any part of one's property to the Lord."—*Keil and Del.*

A bond. Heb., *issar*, "the negative vow, or vow of abstinence."—*Ibid.*

"A vow involved an obligation to do: a bond, an obligation to forbear doing."—*Speaker's Comm.*

He shall not break his word. Margin: "profane," i.e., by not fulfilling, or by violating it.

Four cases are specially prescribed for: (1) that of a youthful maiden in her father's house (vers. 3-5); (2) that of a woman betrothed, but not married (vers. 6-8); (3) that of a widow, or divorced woman (ver. 9); (4) that of a married woman in her husband's house (vers. 10-12).

Ver. 6. *And if she had at all an husband, &c.* "Rather, 'And if she shall at all be an husband's, and her vows shall be upon her, or a rash utterance of her lips, wherewith she hath bound her soul.' The 'at all' intimates that the case of a girl betrothed, but not yet actually married, is here contemplated."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Uttered ought, &c. "Lit., 'the rash utterance of her lips.'"—*Ibid.* "Gossip of her lips, that which is uttered thoughtlessly or without reflection."—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 15. *He shall bear her iniquity;* i.e., "the sin which the wife would have had to bear if she had broken the vow of her own accord."—*Ibid.*

THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION OF RELIGIOUS VOWS.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

Notice—

I. The case supposed.

"If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond."

1. *The vow is made unto God.* He is the only true and proper object of religious vows. There is not a trace in the Bible of vows being made to saints or angels.

2. *The vow binds the soul.* "Swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond." "A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul."

3. *The vow is voluntarily made.* "Vows were not of Divine appointment, but originated with men them-

selves." Spontaneity was of the essence of a vow. The obligations were always voluntarily self-imposed. This is clearly expressed in regard to the offering of Ananias (Acts v. 4). (a)

4. *The thing vowed must be lawful.* No one can rightly bind himself to do an unrighteous thing. Generally vows were solemn promises to consecrate something to God, or to do something in His service and to His honour. But "votive offerings arising from the produce of any impure traffic, were wholly forbidden" (Deut. xxiii. 18). The offering must be pure; the service must be righteous and good.

II. The danger implied.

"He shall not break His word," &c.

This implies temptation to break the word, or peril of failure in fulfilling the vow. There is in human nature a deep-rooted and deplorable tendency to forget in health the vows which were made in sickness, and to ignore in our security and peace the vows we made in our danger and alarm. (b)

III. The command given.

1. *That he shall perform his vow.* "He shall not break his word."

2. *That he shall fully perform his vow.* "He shall do according to all

that proceedeth out of his mouth." (c)
Conclusion.

Appeal to those who have unfulfilled vows resting upon them.

1. *Baptismal vows*, in the case of some of you, are unfulfilled. (d)

2. *Vows made in affliction or danger* by some of you have not been paid.

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it," &c. (Eccles. v. 4, 5). Humbly and earnestly resolve, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now." Resolve and do.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vow is a promise made to God, in the things of God. The obligation of it is, by casuists, deemed to be as great as that of an oath. It is a sacred and solemn bond, wherever a soul binds itself to God in lawful things; and being once bound by it, it is a most heinous evil to violate it. "It is a high piece of dishonesty to fail in what we have promised to men," saith Dr. Hall; "but to disappoint God in our vows is no less than sacrilege. The act is free and voluntary; but if once a just and lawful vow or promise hath passed your lips, you may not be false to God in keeping it." It is with us as to our vows, as it was with Ananias and Sapphira as to their substance: "Whilst it remained," saith Peter, "was it not thine own?" He needed not to sell and give it; but if he will give, he may not reserve; it is death to save only a part; he lies to the Holy Ghost that defalcates from that which he engaged himself to bestow. If thou hast vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, look to it that thou be faithful in thy performance, for He is a great and jealous God, and will not be mocked.—*J. Flavel*.

This topic is illustrated on pp. 92, 93.

(b) In English we say, "The river past, and God forgotten," to express with how mournful a frequency He whose assistance was invoked, it may have been earnestly, in the moment of peril, is remembered no more as soon as by His help the danger has been surmounted. The Spaniards have the proverb too, but it is with them: "The river past, the saint forgotten," the saints being in Spain more prominent objects of invocation than God. And the Italian form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: "The peril passed, the saint mocked."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

Praises should always follow answered prayer. It was thus with one man. He was very ill; a great strong man in his day: yet disease touched him, shrivelled him up, laid him upon a lowly bed, made him pray to the humblest

creature in his house for favours hour after hour. As he lay there in his lowliness and weakness, he said, "If God would raise me up I would be a new man, I would be a devout worshipper in the sanctuary, I would live to His glory." And God gathered him up again; did not break the bruised reed, did not quench the smoking flax, but permitted the man to regain his faculties. And he was not well one month till he became as worldly as he was before his affliction. He prayed as if his heart loved God; and when he got his health back again he was a practical atheist—he was virtually the basest of blasphemers.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 186 (b).

(c) I know of two men who started business with this vow: "We shall give to God one tenth of all our profits." The first year the profits were considerable. The next year there was increase in the profits, and of course increase in the tithe; in a few years the profits became very large indeed, so that the partners said to one another, "Is not a tenth of this rather too much to give away? suppose we say now we shall give a twentieth?" And they gave a twentieth,—and the next year the profits had fallen down; the year after that they fell down again, and the men said to one another, as Christians should say in such a case, "Have not we broken our vow? Have not we robbed God?" And in no spirit of selfish calculation, but with humility of soul, self-reproach, and bitter contrition, they went back to God and told Him how the matter stood, prayed His forgiveness, renewed their vow, and God opened the windows of heaven and came back to them and all the old prosperity.—*Ibid.*

(d) The children of pious parents, who in their infancy were dedicated to God in holy baptism, lie under the solemn vows which were assumed in their behalf. Though your parents had authority to promise for you, it is you that must perform it, for it is you that they obliged. If you think they did you

wrong, you may be out of the covenant when you will, if you will renounce the kingdom of heaven. But it is much wiser to be thankful to God, that your parents were the means of so great a blessing to you; and to do that again more expressly by yourselves, which

they did for you; and openly with thankfulness, to own the covenant in which you are engaged, and live in the performance and in the comforts of it all your days.—*Richard Baxter*.

THE VOWS OF WOMEN,—THEIR RATIFICATION AND ABROGATION.

(Verses 3-16.)

These verses suggest the following observations—

I. That religious vows are sometimes rashly made.

They are sometimes “the rash utterance of the lips” (ver. 6). Considering their solemn nature and binding force, they ought never to be made without serious consideration.

II. That religious vows made by females under the authority of a father or a husband, and disallowed by them, cease to be binding.

Three examples are given of the abrogation of the vows of women. (1) A father may annul a vow made by his youthful daughter dwelling with him (vers. 3-5). (2) A man betrothed to a maiden, but not married to her, may annul a vow made by her after her betrothal to him (vers. 6-8). (3) A married man may annul a vow made by his wife (vers. 10-12). But in order to annul these vows the father or the husband, as the case may be, must forbid their fulfilment, and that at once. If he kept silence concerning the vow, by so doing he ratified it (vers. 4, 7, 11). And the prohibition of the vow, if it was to be of any force, must be promptly uttered. “If her father disallow her in the day that he heareth,” &c. (ver. 5, and vers. 7, 8, 12). These regulations were wise and equitable; for the daughter or wife might make a vow which would be “prejudicial to the affairs of the family, perplex the provision made for the table if the vow related to meats, or lessen the provision made for his children if the vow would be more expensive than his estate would bear,” or otherwise seriously

interfere with the measures of the father and husband.

III. That vows made by females under such authority and not disallowed, and vows made by females not under such authority, are binding.

If the father did not without delay protest against his young daughter’s vow (vers. 3, 4), or the intending husband against the vow of his betrothed (vers. 6, 7), or the husband against the vow of his wife (vers. 10, 11), such vow remained in full force. And the vows made by widows or divorced wives were as binding as those made by a man (ver. 9). Not being dependent upon a husband or father, such a woman was at liberty to make vows, and having made a vow was bound to fulfil it.

IV. That if a husband improperly annul a vow made by his wife, the guilt of its non-fulfilment will rest upon him.

“But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day,” &c. (vers. 14, 15). In this case the guilt of the unpaid vow would rest upon the husband; and he must either present a trespass-offering for the expiation of his sin (Lev. v. 4-13), or he must bear the punishment due to the sin.

The regulations we have been considering authorise the following *inferences*—

i. *The solemnity of religious vows.* They relate to the soul and to God. They ought not to be lightly made; and when made, they should be performed with scrupulous fidelity.

ii. *The importance and sacredness of parental authority.* Even a vow made

by a maiden to God must be set aside if her father object to it. The Scriptures clearly and repeatedly affirm the authority of parents (Exod. xx. 12; Eph. vi. 1-3). And it is confirmed by the example of our Lord (Luke ii. 51). This authority involves a double obligation—

1. *Parental obligation*—to consider and to promote the welfare of their children, &c. (Gen. xviii. 19; Deut. vi. 7; Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4). (a)

2. *Filial obligation*. (1) To revere their parents (Exod. xx. 12; Mal. i. 6; Eph. vi. 2, 3). (b) (2) To obey their parents. We see from this chapter that “obedience to a father stood higher than a self-imposed religious service.”

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.” (c) (3) To be grateful to their parents. The ceaseless solicitude and tender care and quenchless love of parents for their children should evoke from them deep and thankful affection (John xix. 26, 27; 1 Tim. v. 4). (d)

iii. *The importance and sacredness of marital authority*. The authority of the husband over the wife, as laid down in this chapter, and in other portions of the scriptures, is very great (1 Cor. xi. 3, 7-9; Eph. v. 22-24; 1 Tim. ii. 12-14; 1 Pet. iii. 1-6).

Let the husband “love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When children are born to you, the most solemn book is opened, so far as you are concerned, that ever is opened, except that which relates to your own soul's fate. The account that begins to be incurred when parents rejoice because a child is born to them, is the most solemn account that ever is incurred aside from one's own individual duty towards God. I do not mean that all the misconduct and evil doings of the child are to come back upon the parent, and that there is to be in the child no free will, so that no individual account can belong to him. For if a parent has cleansed his skirts of his children, the guilt of their sins will rest on their heads, and not on his. But unless the parent can show that the child's misconduct and wreck of eternity are not attributable to any fault of his, the weight of the child's condemnation will be divided—no, it will not be divided, it will rest undivided on the child's head, and undivided on the parent's head. It is a responsibility assumed by every parent, to look after the welfare, temporal and eternal, of his child. If God had sent to him an angel, with a scroll of heavenly writ, saying, “I send to school to you my well-beloved child; take it, teach it, and bring it back to heaven; and let its education be the test of your fidelity”—if God had sent to the parent such a missive, his responsibility would not be greater or more real than that which is laid upon us when we undertake to bring up children. They are not simply playthings, although they do make playthings. They are not mere little pleasure-bells, although no bells ever ring so sweetly. They are not instruments of music, and pictures, and flowers of dear delight in our household, that we may enjoy them, and that they may enjoy themselves. They are

not frolicsome kittens and singing birds for our pleasure and their own. They are God's immortals. They are sent forth to make an earthly pilgrimage, and you are their school-masters and pilots. It is a solemn thing to have such a charge put into your hands.—*H. W. Beecher.*

For additional illustrations on *Parental duties and responsibilities*, see pp. 33, 46, 47.

(b) There are some children who are almost ashamed to own their parents because they are poor or in a low station of life. We will therefore give an example of the contrary, as displayed by the Dean of Canterbury, afterwards Archbishop Tillotson. His father, who was a plain Yorkshireman, perhaps something like those we now call “Friends,” approached the house where his son resided, and enquired whether “John Tillotson was at home.” The servant, indignant at what he thought his insolence, drove him from the door; but the Dean, who was within, hearing the voice of his father, instead of embracing the opportunity afforded him of going out and bringing in his father in a more private manner, came running out, exclaiming in the presence of his astonished servants, “It is my beloved father!” and falling down on his knees, asked for his blessing.—*Dict. of Illust.*

(c) During Havelock's stay in England, a gentleman went one evening to the house of the colonel, in compliance with an invitation. In the course of conversation, Mrs. Havelock turned suddenly round to her husband, and said, “My dear, where is Harry?” referring to her son, whom she had not seen during the whole afternoon. The colonel started to his feet. “Well, poor fellow! he's standing on London Bridge, and in this cold too! I told him to wait for me there at twelve o'clock to

day; and, in the pressure of business, I quite forgot the appointment." It was now about seven o'clock in the evening. The colonel ordered a cab to be called; and, as he went forth to deliver his son from his watch on London Bridge, he turned to excuse himself from his visitor, saying, "You see, sir, that is the discipline of a soldier's family." In the course of an hour, he returned with poor Harry, who seemed to have passed through the afternoon's experience with the greatest good humour.—*Ibid.*

(d) An old schoolmaster said one day to a clergyman who came to examine his school, "I believe the children know the catechism word for word." "But do they understand it? that is the question," said the clergyman. The schoolmaster only bowed respectfully, and the examination began. A little boy had repeated the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" and he was desired to explain it. Instead of trying to do so, the little fellow with his face covered with blushes, said, almost in a whisper, "Yesterday, sir, I showed some strange gentlemen over the mountain. The sharp stones cut my feet; and the gentlemen saw them bleeding, and they gave me some money to buy me shoes. I gave it to my mother, for she had no shoes either; and I thought I could go barefoot better than she." The clergyman then looked very much pleased; and the old schoolmaster only quietly remarked, "God gives us His grace and His blessing."—*Christian Treasury.*

(e) Sometimes we have seen a model marriage, founded in pure love and cemented in mutual esteem. Therein the husband acts as a tender head, and the wife, as a true spouse, realises the model marriage relation. She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, his affection: to her he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all in all, her heart's love belongs to him and to him only. She finds sweetest content and solace in his company, his fellowship, his fondness; he is her little world, her paradise, her choice treasure. To please him she would gladly lay aside her own pleasure to find it doubled in gratifying him. She is

glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no name for herself, his honour is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She would defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak for him. The domestic circle is her kingdom; that she may there create happiness and comfort is her life-work, and his smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress she thinks of him, without constraint she consults his taste, and thinks nothing beautiful that is obnoxious to his eye. A tear from his eye, because of any unkindness on her part, would grievously torment her. She asks not how her behaviour may please a stranger, or how another's judgment may be satisfied with her behaviour; let her beloved be content and she is glad. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand, but she believes in them all, and anything that she can do to promote them she delights to perform. He lavishes love on her, and she on him. Their object in life is common. There are points where their affections so intimately unite that none could tell which is first and which is second. To see their children growing up in health and strength, to see them holding posts of usefulness and honour, is their mutual concern; in this and other matters they are fully one. Their wishes blend, their hearts are indivisible. By degrees they come very much to think the same thoughts. Intimate association creates uniformity; we have known this to become so complete that at the same moment the same utterance has leaped to both their lips. Happy woman and happy man! If heaven be found on earth, they have it! At last the two are so welded, so engrafted on one stem, that their old age presents a lovely attachment, a common sympathy, by which its infirmities are greatly alleviated, and its burdens are transformed into fresh bonds of love. So happy a union of will, sentiment, thought, and heart exists between them, that the two streams of their life have washed away the dividing bank, and run on as one broad current of united existence till their common joy falls into the main ocean of felicity.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Moses had already received command to smite the Midianites (chap. xxv. 16-18); and in this chapter we have the order given to him to execute that command, and the narrative of its execution.

Verse 2. *Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, i.e., for the injury*

which the Midianites had done to the Israelites in seducing them to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Peor.

Afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. See p. 379.

Verse 3. *Avenge the Lord of Midian, because their seduction of the*

Israelites had violated the Divine honour.

Verse 4. *Of every tribe a thousand.* Margin: "A thousand of a tribe, a thousand of a tribe."

Verse 5. *So there were delivered.* Or, so there were "counted off."—*Fuerst.* Dr. Howard: "And they numbered out."

Verse 6. *Pinchets.* He had manifested his fitness for a prominent position in this enterprize by his zeal for God and against the idolators (chap. xxv. 6-13).

With the holy instruments, and the trumpets. "Or rather, 'with the holy instruments, to wit, the trumpets,' for the trumpets themselves seem to be the instruments intended."—*Speaker's Comm.* Comp. chap. x. 9.

Verse 8. *And they slew, &c.* Render thus: 'And the kings of Midian they put to death, beside those that fell in the battle; namely,' &c."—*Ibid.* Comp. Josh. xiii. 21.

Verse 10. *Goodly castles.* Rather, "encampments or hamlets."—*Fuerst.* "Hamlets" seems preferable. "Tent-villages."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 11. *The spoil, i.e.,* booty in goods such as are mentioned in vers. 22 and 50.

The prey, i.e., the captives and the cattle seized as booty.

Verse 16. *Caused . . . to commit trespass.* Keil and Del.: "'They have become to the Israelites to work unfaithfulness towards Jehovah,' i.e., they have induced them to commit an act of unfaithfulness towards Jehovah. The word נִסְקָר, which only occurs in this chapter, viz., in vers. 5 and 16, appears to be used in the sense of giving, delivering, and then, like נָתַן, doing, making, effecting."

Verse 17. *Kill every male, &c.* "The object of the command to put all the male children to death, was to exterminate the whole nation, as it could not be perpetuated in the women. Of the female sex, all were to be put to death who had known the lying with a man, and therefore might possibly have been engaged in the licentious worship of Peor (chap. xxv. 2), to preserve the congregation from all contamination from that abominable idolatry."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19 (comp. chap. xix. 11, 12).

Verse 22. *Brass.* Rather, *copper*, "as the mixture of copper and zinc, now known as brass, was not known to the ancients."—*Alford.*

Verse 23. *Purified with the water of separation* (comp. chap. xix. 9, 17-19).

Verse 49. *There lacketh not one man of us.* A noteworthy proof of the presence and protection of God.

Verse 50. *Chains.* Or "arm bands, arm ornaments, 2 Sam. i. 10."—*Fuerst.*

Rings. "Signet rings."—*Ibid.*

Tablets. "Buckles, bracelets."—*Ibid.* Others say they were ornaments "worn suspended from the neck."

To make an atonement. "An acknowledgment of having received undeserved mercies. These, if acknowledged, would have entailed guilt on the soul."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.* "In value about £20,000."—*Speaker's Comm.* "If we take the golden shekel at 10 thalers (30 shillings), the value of the ornaments taken by the officers under Moses would be about 167,500 thalers (£25,125)."—*Keil and Del.*

THE VENGEANCE OF JEHOVAH ON MIDIAN.

(Verses 1-12.)

This paragraph suggests the following observations—

1. That in the administration of

the Divine government the punishment of sin is certain.

The Israelites were severely pun-

ished for the sins which they committed with the Midianites, and now the Midianites are to receive their punishment. Notice—

1. *The sin which the Midianites had committed.* Their women had seduced the Israelites to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Peor (see p. 487).

2. *The Author of the punishment of the Midianites.* The Lord Himself commanded it; and it seems to us that He prescribed the arrangements for its execution, and empowered and protected its executioners. (a)

3. *The executioners of the punishment.* The Israelites were called upon to avenge the gross wrongs which the Midianites had done them as the people of Jehovah. It was eminently fitting that as Israelitish men had been corrupted by the Midianites, Israelitish men should execute the judgment of God upon them. (b)

4. *The severity of the punishment.* (1) It fell upon an immense number. "They slew all the males." This does "not mean that they exterminated all the men of the nation, but only that they slew all who withstood them; for the nation itself consisted in considerable strength, and was able in a few generations to bring the Israelites themselves under subjection." And, in addition, vast numbers were taken captives, many of whom were afterwards slain. (2) It fell upon persons of every rank. "The kings of Midian they put to death, besides those that fell in the battle; namely, Evi," &c. Against the punishments of God, princes and potentates are as defenceless as plebeians and paupers. "There is no respect of persons with God." "He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." (3) It involved the destruction of their towns and villages, and the loss of their property. "The children of Israel took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt," &c. (vers. 9-11). (c)

In the righteous government of God

sin ever brings forth sorrow, tribulation follows transgression. (d)

II. That God can work by many, or by few, in the execution of His purposes.

Out of an army of more than six hundred thousand (chap. xxvii. 51), only twelve thousand men were sent to this war. The number was probably small, as compared also with the forces which they had to encounter. The accomplishment of the purpose of God by this small force was fitted to answer three ends—

1. *To teach them that this expedition was, in a special manner, the Lord's.* He was concerned in the punishment of the sin of Midian, and in the vindication of His honour, &c.

2. *To teach them that He can effect His purposes "by many or by few"* (1 Sam. xiv. 6; and Judg. vii.). (e)

3. *To check any temptation or tendency to self-glorification on the part of the soldiers.* (f)

III. That God honours the holy zeal of His servants by employing them as leaders in the execution of His purposes.

"Moses sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, even the trumpets to blow in his hand." Phinehas went with the army as the priest of the Lord, to encourage them in fighting, because the war was a holy one against the enemies of the Lord their God (comp. chap. x. 9). His appointment to this duty, on this occasion, may be viewed—

1. *As the employment of an agent of approved fitness for his duty.* Phinehas had shown his fitness for this appointment (chap. xxv.). In the accomplishment of His purposes, God employs suitable agents and instruments. (g)

2. *As the reward of distinguished service.* He who is brave and faithful in one duty shall be called to other and more arduous duties (comp. Matt. xxv. 21).

IV. That God enriches His people with the spoils of their enemies.

"And they took all the spoil, and all the prey," &c. (vers. 11, 12).

Those who have assailed the Church by persecution have defeated themselves, and confirmed and extended the Church. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." And they who have attacked it with captious criticism and bitter controversy, have contributed to the strength of its defences and the extension of its

triumphs. They have aroused the scholars and the thinkers of the Church to the marshalling of the evidences of our religion, and to the vindication of its claims. God frustrates the designs of the enemies of His cause, and overrules them for the accomplishment of His purposes and the extension of His kingdom. (*h*)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) For illustrations on the *justifiableness of war*, see pp. 19, 20.

(*b*) For illustrations on the *Executioners of Divine judgments*, see pp. 252, 312.

(*c*) Among the causes which justify war, none is more unanimously asserted by political writers, than an attempt on the part of one community against the civil institutions, and so against the integrity and internal peace, of another. The Hebrews had therefore an undoubted right, even apart from the Divine command, to attack the people of Midian, who had treacherously endeavoured to withdraw them from their allegiance, and thus to unsettle the foundations of all their union, prosperity, and peace, and prepare them to become an easy conquest to their own arms.

Now, if it be right to wage war at all, it is not only right to wage it in such a manner as shall accomplish its object, but it would be wrong to wage it in any other manner. War is, in its very nature, the infliction of suffering in order to an ulterior good; and the infliction of any degree of suffering is unjustifiable, unless so far as it may lead to this result. If, therefore, in the prosecution of a war, the measures adopted are of such lenity as to be insufficient to produce the end in view, namely, protection for the present and security for the future, the mitigated evil then becomes uncompensated by any ulterior good. It is then a causeless and unjustifiable evil; it is not mercy, but cruelty and crime. This principle is clear, and is theoretically acknowledged; yet when any application of it however wise and just, tends to severities which we are not accustomed to regard as belonging to the necessities of the case, our feelings are naturally shocked. Yet the principle continues to operate, and is acknowledged in all our warfare, although, with the progress of civilisation, it has come to be understood in civilised communities, that inflictions formerly resorted to shall be forborne. But in their conflicts with barbarous nations, who have no such understanding, they are accustomed to adopt harsher measures; and this for the simple and sound reason, that the object would not otherwise be gained, and that if they were to allow a war to be to their adversaries a less evil than these adversaries were in the habit of expect-

ing it to prove, such a self-prostrating lenity is ascribed to weakness, and not to the pride of conscious strength. Severity, in short, is beneficent, when it is suited to guard against the necessity of its own repetition; and how much or how little is adequate to that end, is a question to be determined by reference to some existing state of society. The Israelites conducted their warfares on the principles generally recognised in their time; and to have done so on any other or milder principle, against such enemies as they had to contend with, would have been ruinous and suicidal. Thus only could it be effectual; and war not intended to be effectual should not be waged at all. It is confidently hoped and believed, that the time is coming, is near at hand, when war, as now conducted by ourselves—when any war,—will be looked back upon with the same feelings of disgust and horror, as those with which we now regard the conflicts of the nations beyond the Mediterranean three-and-thirty centuries ago.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(*d*) For illustrations on the *Certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 258, 312, 318, 374.

(*e*) The straw cannot beat the mountain into flying dust. The hand of man cannot crumble the great gigantic bulwarks behind which error has entrenched itself. You are quite right. But God hath chosen the weak things to throw down the mighty. It is not the straw that does it; it is the hand that wields it. Shakespeare dips his pen into the ink, and writes *Hamlet*. I take up the same pen, dip into the same ink, but I can't write *Hamlet*. It is not the pen that does it; it is the writer. It is not the little instrumentality; it is the God who is able to do, and who has done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

The weakness of the instrument is a small matter when the hand is infinitely strong. You and I have said, "We are men full of infirmities. What can we do? We have but few talents, we have no social position, we have not the opportunities of doing good that some have, and, therefore, we are discouraged." But the Lord knows thy heart, my brother. If thou wert meaner in the scale of society; if thou hadst not even one, but only half a

talent; if thou wert less able to speak than thou art, and wert a man slow of speech like Moses; yet if God be behind thee, dost thou not know that every weakness of thine is according to His own intent and purport, and is as much designed as the strength of the strongest to illustrate the majesty of His might? Oh, didst thou believe, thy weakness would be thy glory; thou wouldst rejoice even to be nothing, that in this the great All-in-all might the more resplendently display Himself.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(*f*) This point is illustrated on p. 276.

(*g*) The opinion is very prevalent, and the impression still more so—though neither so prevalent as they used to be—that God is in the habit of employing unlikely instruments; that, for the purpose of revealing His all-sufficiency and bringing honour to Himself, He delights to contrast results with their secondary causes, and to disappoint the calculations founded on the supposed efficiency of human agents. To hear some men talk, you might conclude that God cannot be

properly said to employ instruments at all, that in nature, and still more in providence, and most of all in grace, they are not so much instruments that He employs as obstacles, not so much things having a tendency and fitness to accomplish His designs, as things altogether unsuitable and inappropriate. Now, this belief or feeling is entirely erroneous, and woefully mischievous. It is dishonouring to God, and injurious to men. Such is not God's custom, such is not even God's exceptional act. We rejoice in the thought that, in a sense, God does all things, that there is no power but of God, that even physical instruments and moral agents derive all their force from Him, owing to Him their existence and their efficiency; but we also hold fast by the conviction that power and wisdom go together; that God acts by laws and delights to honour them, and that in all His operations He pays profound respect to the inherent relevancy of things.—*A. J. Morris.*

(*h*) An illustration on this point appears on p. 472.

THE DOOM OF THE DOUBLE-HEARTED.

(*Verse 8.*)

“Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.”

Balaam had taken the field against Israel,—against a people whom he had pronounced blessed,—whom he had pronounced invincible both by earth and hell. Yes; Balaam “the son of Beor,”—he, and not another of the name,—*he* rushes on the bosses of the Almighty's buckler; *he* defies Israel and Israel's God!

But he fails. He would fain have cursed Israel; but he could not. He counselled Moab to seduce Israel by temptation, and his device succeeded too well. He now fetches the last stroke. In vain. He perishes ignobly. He is slain with the sword which he had defied.

Such is the end of the backslider; of one who knew the truth but did it not; who once said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” It was certainly not the end he prayed for; yet it was the end to which his whole life had been tending. He reaped what he sowed, and in him “God was not mocked.”

He died as he lived, in fellowship

with Moab, yet in heart persuaded that Israel was the beloved of the Lord, and that Jehovah was God. His life had been with Midian, and so was his death.

His grave is with the unclean. He passes from earth with none to soothe his death-bed and close his eyes; none to lament for him or build his monument. Sad end of a life of halting and indecision, and resistance of the Spirit, and braving of conscience, and rejection of light, and wretched covetousness. He “loved the wages of unrighteousness,” and verily he had his reward.

Let us see what he wanted and how he failed; how ambitious he was, yet what a life of utter failure and disappointment was his. He would fain have risen, but he sunk. He would fain have been rich, but he lost everything. What a wasted life! Yet the life of one who knew better things, but did them not; who knew that the world was vanity, yet followed it; who knew that Israel's portion was the best, yet chose that of Moab; who knew the true God and the true Messiah, but preferred the idolatries of Israel's enemies. He saw Him “from the top

of the rocks," but that was all. He got a passing glimpse of the cross, but no more. It was all he saw of the way of life, ere he plunged into death and woe.

I. He wanted to serve two masters.

These were the same as the Lord in after days designated God and mammon. He wanted not to offend either; to please both. He was like Issachar crouching between two burdens. But it would not do. He failed. Such is the certain failure of all who make the like attempt. "Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon." He *loved* the one master, mammon; and he *dreaded* the other; but would fain do the will of both. He could not afford to lose the favour of either. Miserable life! More miserable death! The life and death of one whose whole career was one long attempt to do the bidding both of God and the devil.

II. He wanted to earn two kinds of wages.

The wages of righteousness and the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. ii. 15), were both in his eyes; he would fain have the pay both of God and of the devil. He was unwilling to do or say anything which would deprive him of either. He was as cautious and cunning as he was covetous. He would not work without wages; and he would work for a hundred masters if they would only pay him well. How like many so-called "religious" men amongst ourselves.

III. He wanted to do two opposite things at the same time.

He wished both to bless and to curse. He was willing to do *either* according as it might serve his interests. The only question with him was, "Would it pay?" If the blessing would pay, he would take it; if the curse would pay, he would take it; if both would pay, he would take them both. Blessing and cursing were both alike to him; confessing and denying the true God, worshipping Baal or Jehovah, it mattered not, if by "this craft he could have his wealth." So with many among us. If Sabbath-keeping will pay, they

will keep the Sabbath; if Sabbath-breaking will pay, they will break the Sabbath. True Balaams—without principle, without faith, and without fear.

IV. He wanted two kinds of friendship.

He would fain be friends with every body. Perhaps he was timid; of those whom Scripture calls fearful (Rev. xxi. 8); perhaps, also, he was ambitious, and sought great things for himself wherever these could be obtained (Jer. xlv. 5); certainly he had before him "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," and the love of man's approbation which brings no less a snare; he *dreaded* Israel's God, of whom he knew much, but he *dreaded* also Moab's gods, though whether he really believed in them we know not. Made up of these contradictions, and acting not by faith but unbelief, he tried to secure the friendship of all whom he counted great, whether in heaven or on earth. He shut his eyes not only to the sin but to the *impossibility* of such a course; he saw not that the friendship of the world is the enemy of God, and that whosoever will be the friend of the world must be the enemy of God.

V. He wanted to have two religions.

He saw religion to be a paying concern, a profitable trade, and he was willing to accept it from anybody or everybody, to adopt it from any quarter if it would but raise him in the world, and make his fortune. Perhaps he thought all religions equally right or equally wrong, equally true or equally false. He would rather not offend any god if he could help it. He would make concessions to "religious prejudices" of any kind if the prejudiced people will only help him on. . . . Two gods and two religions he wanted to have.

But this double service, and double friendship, and double religion, would not do. He would make nothing by them. They profited him nothing either in this life or that to come. His end was with the ungodly, his portion with the enemies of Israel. And his

soul, where could it be? Not with Israel's God, or Israel's Christ, or in Israel's heaven. He reaped what he sowed.

He was a good specimen of multitudes in these last days. An educated and intelligent man, shrewd and quick-seeing, of respectable character; high in favour with the rich and great, a *religious* man, too, after a fashion, not unsound in creed so far, for he acknowledges Jehovah as the true God. But he is fond of the world, fond of money, fond of preferment: one that would not let religion stand in the way of his advancement; who could pocket all scruples if he could pocket a little gold along with them; hollow of heart, but with a fair outside. He would rather not risk offending God, but yet he would not like to lose Balak's rewards and honours. He would rather not take up his cross, nor deny himself, nor forsake all for his God.

So is it with multitudes amongst us. They want as much religion as will save them from hell; not an atom more. The world is their real god; gold is their idol; it is in mammon's temple that they worship. Love God

with all their heart! They don't so much as understand the meaning of such a thing. Sacrifice riches, place, honour, friends, to Christ! They scoff at the thing as madness.

Oh, be on the side of God, out and out. . . . You may follow Christ in *some* things, but if not in all, what is your following worth? This world *or* the world to come, that is the alternative; not this world *and* the world to come. Christ *all* or *nothing*. No middle ground; no half-discipleship; no compromise. The new birth, or no religion at all.

Look to thy latter end. *What* is it to be? *Where* is it to be? *With whom* is it to be? Anticipate thy eternity. Is it to be darkness or light, shame or glory?

Do not sear your conscience by praying Balaam's prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous." What will that avail you? It is the *life* of the righteous that God is calling you to lead; and He will take care of your death. Decide, halt not; else surely yours will be a wretched life, and a still more wretched death.—*H. Bonar, D.D.*
Abridged from "*Light and Truth*."

THE RETURN OF THE VICTORIOUS ARMY.

(Verses 13-24.)

Let us notice—

I. The reception of the returning warriors.

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp." Thus the chief men of the nation honour the brave men who had been avenging the Israelites and Jehovah upon the Midianites.

Learn, *that services rendered to the public should be heartily recognized by the public.*

II. The remonstrance with the returning warriors.

"And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, the captains over thousands," &c. (vers. 14-16). The

women had been the chief offenders in the matter which the army had been sent to avenge; they had seduced the men of Israel into sin; therefore in the execution of their commission (ver. 3) the soldiers should have slain them. "The sword of war," says Scott, "should spare women and children, as incapable of resisting; but the sword of justice knows no distinction, except that of guilty or not guilty, and more or less guilty. This war was the execution of a righteous sentence upon a *guilty* nation, in which the women were the principal criminals; and perhaps particular instructions had been given on this head: therefore Moses was angry when he found the women had been spared."

Learn, *the sinfulness of omissions of duty or of the merely partial performance of duty.* (a)

III. The retribution to the Midianitish women.

"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man," &c. (vers. 17, 18). This may be viewed—

1. *As a punishment.* The law concerning adultery was, "the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xx. 10). It is almost absolutely certain that many of these women had committed adultery with the Israelites in the matter of Baal-peor. The Lord had himself put to death by the plague the Israelites who thus sinned; and now as part of His vengeance upon Midian the women who sinned are to be put to death. The tempted having been punished, it would not have been right for the tempters to escape. And since it was impossible, except by miracle, to separate the guilty from the innocent, all the women were slain (comp. 1 Pet. iv. 17).

2. *As a precaution.* The women who had been engaged in the abominable worship of Baal-peor, would, probably, had they been spared, have seduced the Israelites again into sin: and so their death may have appeared necessary for securing the purity and security of Israel. And the boys, on growing into manhood, would probably have conspired to avenge the slaughter of their parents upon Israel, and so they were

put to death. Moreover, as an example of Divine retribution, it was thus rendered more impressive, "warning parents not to imitate the guilt of the Midianites, lest they should involve their beloved offspring in destruction." (b)

Learn, *that it is our duty to avoid every occasion of temptation to sin* (comp. Matt. v. 29, 30). (c)

IV. The purification of the returning warriors, their captives, and their spoils.

"And do ye abide without the camp seven days," &c. (vers. 19-23). The camp of Israel was regarded as holy because of the presence of the Lord God there; and the soldiers having become ceremonially unclean by their contact with the slain, could not enter therein until they were purified (comp. chap. v. 1-4; xix. 11-20). And the captives having by their captivity become "to some extent a constituent part of the Israelitish people," needed purification also, especially as they had practised abominable idolatry. And the spoil, as being taken from a heathen people, would need purification, before it could be admitted into the camp, and appropriated to the use of the people of God.

Learn, *that it is the solemn duty of the Church of God to maintain moral purity within its borders.* "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 16—vii. 1). (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 278, 279.

(b) A more difficult point is the command of Moses, that the adult females and the male children among the prisoners should be put to death. Pained as we are by the recital of such horrors, and glad as we feel that such usages have passed away from the practices of war, close examination will enable us to see that the principles which have been laid down (see p. 538), supply an adequate excuse for a course which Moses himself must have regarded as distressing. His course was designed to act *in terrorem*, with a view to fu-

ture security. It is clear that he had no satisfaction in the task. On the contrary, he appears to have been strongly excited when he beheld the array of prisoners, and to have uttered a rebuke which shows that he would far rather that whatever severity needed to be exercised should have been finished in the furious haste of onset, than that it should thus be left for execution in cold blood. As it was, however, the prisoners were upon his hands, and he had to dispose of them as the recent hazards and the present condition of the state demanded, in an age when the necessities of the world's government involved the use of

a much harsher instrumentality than is now requisite. Taking these considerations with us, it may be asked, What was to be done with these prisoners? Should they be sent home unharmed, or should they be welcomed on an equal footing to the hospitality of Israel? Then if the views already stated (p. 538) are sound, the war ought not to have been undertaken. This follows, even without insisting upon the circumstance, that had the latter alternative been adopted, the youthful sons of the Midianitish warriors would soon have grown up to be a sword in the bosom of the still feeble state, and possibly to compel the hazards and hardships of another conflict. Then, with regard to the adult females, it is to be considered that it was their wicked instrumentality which had led Israel to sin, and had given occasion to the recent war; and, on the other hand, the danger to be apprehended from them, if they were allowed again to try their seductive arts upon the Israelites, had just been proved to be such as the infant state would by no means tolerate.

Keeping in view, therefore, the time and country in which Moses lived, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded, it will be a bold thing for anyone to say, that as a man entrusted with the welfare of a nation he acted wrongly. That he acted only from a strong sense of duty, every one who has studied his character must know; and who among us, in these

altered times, is better able than he was to judge of what his duty exacted? But if in this case he did err, in judging that the stern obligations of political duty allowed him to show no pity on more than one class of his prisoners, let him alone bear the blame of the deed. He appears to have acted on his own judgment, and does not, as usual, adduce the command of the Lord for the course which was taken.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(c) A man who has been corrupted by the fire of intoxication, says, "I cannot resist the cup when I sit with my companions and it is being passed over my shoulder; I have to drink; I am seized as with an afflatus of infernal fire, and I cannot help drinking." It may be that, when you bring yourself where liquor is dispensed, you cannot help drinking; but you can avoid going there. Once having tried it and found that you could not resist the temptation, the next time you are guilty, not for not resisting it, but for going where the cup that is irresistible to you is handed about; and you are just as guilty as though you could resist the temptation and did not, only the guilt takes hold one step further back. Men are responsible for their volitions, and for those conditions which produce volitions—and this is the opinion of men generally.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 78, 94.

THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM.

(Verse 16.)

How shall we characterise the conduct of Balaam in this transaction? Consider—

I. The measure of his criminality.

To do this we must form some estimate of his knowledge of what was right for him to do towards Israel. He knew *everything* concerning Israel, and their relation to God. His sin was thus committed knowingly, consciously, wilfully. He *set* himself to do wickedly.

II. His motives in this course.

The meanest. He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

III. The baseness of the method he adopted to accomplish his design.

God had revealed to him, in prophetic insight, the secret of Israel's greatness and strength. And Balaam used that very inspiration to injure, fatally, God's own chosen people.—*W. Roberts.* Quoted in *The Biblical Museum.*

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOILS OF THE WAR.

(Verses 25-47.)

The Lord God gave directions to Moses as to how the booty taken from the vanquished Midianites should be

divided. This would tend to prevent dissatisfaction and complaint, &c. Notice—

I. In this distribution the claims of all classes of the community were recognised.

The soldiers who had fought the battle and seized the booty did not retain the whole of it. They had been chosen out of the whole congregation to conduct the war for the congregation, which had therefore a just claim to share in the spoils. They "that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and all the congregation," the priests, and the Levites, all received a share.

Learn, that public servants should seek to benefit the entire community. (a)

II. In this distribution the claims of each class were considered and equitably dealt with.

Though all classes shared in the booty, all classes did not have equal portions. And this was just. The soldiers who had returned from the war, though only one fiftieth of the entire congregation, received for their share as much as all their brethren who had remained at home. And it was right that, inasmuch as they had borne the hardships and hazards of the war, they should be rewarded for their services. Again, the portion of the Levites was ten times as much as that

of the priests, as they were vastly more numerous. But the portion of each individual among the priests must have been considerably greater than that of each individual among the Levites, as was fitting on account of the more exalted and responsible character of their office. The proportion allotted to each class seems to have been conspicuously just and fair.

Learn, that God requires us to act equitably in all our dealings.

III. In this distribution the claims of the Lord were practically acknowledged.

The portions which were given by the warriors to the priests, and by the congregation to the Levites, were "a tribute unto the Lord"—"a heave offering of the Lord." Surely this was right and comely. He had given them the victory over the Midianites; and they would have been guilty of injustice and ingratitude if they had not presented a thank-offering to Him.

Learn, that of all our gains a portion should be devoted to the Lord God. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (comp. Deut. viii. 10-18). (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All personal and private interests must be sacrificed to the call of duty. In the higher walks of benevolent activity, there is no such thing as a life of inglorious ease. . . .

This sublime principle of self-annihilation is conspicuous in the Christian system. Compared with the one act of the Saviour's consecration and surrender, the flame of a thousand worlds would have gone out in cold ashes. Having loved us even unto death, this was the last possible point to which His self-devotion could reach, and never was there such a perfect oblivion of self as in His one offering on the Cross. Drinking into this spirit, His disciples forsook all and followed Him. Martyrs and confessors stand before us magnanimous in the spirit of a self-forgetting love. If the Greeks provided that their citizens might be brave in mind, and strong in body, Christianity must ever be looked upon as the religion of heroism. We must be prepared to give up whatever comes between the call of duty and our own individual interest. We

know little of the power of the Cross, if it has not crucified us to the world, and crucified the world to us. In proportion as we are filled with the power of the Cross, do we become superior to the littleness and the selfishness of our nature, and devote ourselves to the cause of universal good.—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) Justice is the greatest interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. Wherever her temple stands, and so long as it is duly honoured, there is a foundation for social security, and general happiness, and the improvement and progress of our race. And whoever labours on this edifice with usefulness and distinction, whoever clears its foundations, strengthens its pillars, adorns its entablatures, or contributes to raise its august dome still higher in the skies, connects himself in name and fame and character with that which is and must be as enduring as the frame of human society.—*Webster.*

(c) A man gives away a sovereign in Christ's name and for Christ's sake. Look at the elements which constitute that act and give it value. The man made the sovereign honestly; it is his, in point of fair service, by what is called right. If he keeps that sovereign, he will break no law in commerce; if he will it away to his family, he will violate no law in social equity; if he spend it upon himself, society will not condemn him. Yet the man deliberately gives that sovereign away to a poor child, to a friendless stranger, to a Christian society. See what lies behind the deed. The man says, in effect if not in words, "The money may be mine, but I myself am not my own. How then can anything, except temporarily, and under laws of stewardship and responsibility? I have no property

in myself; I am bought with a price; I am God's agent. So far as I have given society an equivalent for the sovereign, it is mine; but the strength, the skill, the knowledge by which I gained it are the gifts of God. The image is Caesar's, but the gold is God's. I will hold what I have as Christ's; holding it so, I instantly yield it at His call, saying,—Thine—oh, wounded blessed Christ—Thine is the right!" So this giving away of the sovereign is not an off-hand deed; it is not done flippantly; it is not done to save appearance; it is not done from external social pressure; it becomes a great religious act, a solemn sacrifice, a holy thank-offering.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Additional illustrations on this point appear on pp. 342-344.

A NOBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY FAVOUR.

(Verses 48-54.)

We have here—

I. An extraordinary favour received.

"And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands," &c. (vers. 48, 49). God had not only given them a complete victory and great booty, but He had given them these things without the loss of a single man. In this we have "striking proof of the protection of God; but it is not so marvellous as to furnish any good ground for calling in question the correctness of the narrative. *Rosenmüller* has cited an example from *Tacitus* (Ann. xiii. 39), of the Romans having slaughtered all the foe without losing a single man on the capture of a Parthian castle; and another from *Strabo* (xvi. 11, 28), of a battle in which 1,000 Arabs were slain, and only two Romans. And *Havernick* mentions a similar account from the life of Saladin in his introduction (i. 2, p. 452)." It is also important to bear in mind that "the Midianites were a nomad tribe, who lived by rearing flocks and herds, and therefore were not a warlike people. Moreover, they were probably attacked quite unawares, and being unprepared, were completely routed and cut down without quarter."—*Keil and Del.* Again, in this extraordinary preservation of the army of

Israel we view the hand of the Lord their God. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." He "covered their heads in the day of battle." At His express command they went forth to the war; and He protected them from harm. Their preservation would stamp the war and the victory as His; and so add to the impressiveness of the warning it was intended to convey. (a)

II. An extraordinary favour acknowledged.

When the officers discovered that every man who went forth to the war had returned from it safely, they went to Moses and declared the fact, taking with them a handsome thank-offering as an acknowledgment of their gratitude to God. Their acknowledgment was—

1. *Voluntary.* No one commanded them or exhorted them to do this: their action was spontaneous and hearty; they offered "not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

2. *Practical.* They had not only thanks upon their lips, but a generous offering in their hands. They sought to express their gratitude by their gifts. (b)

3. *Humble.* They offered this oblation "to make an atonement for their

souls before the Lord." This does not mean that the offering was to expiate any particular offence which they had committed; but to acknowledge unmerited mercies. They felt themselves unworthy of the distinguished favours bestowed upon them. (c)

4. *Liberal.* "All the gold of the offering that they offered up to the Lord was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels," the value of which is variously estimated from £20,000, to £25,000. It was, indeed, a right noble offering. (d)

Learn, that the reception of special mercies should be followed by special acknowledgments thereof. (1) Such acknowledgments are due to God. They cannot be withheld without sin. (2)

Such acknowledgments are a benefit to man. "It is good to give thanks unto the Lord," &c. The practical expression of gratitude enriches the heart. (e)

III. The acknowledgment of extraordinary favours accepted.

"And Moses and Eleazar, the priest, took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord." This means, as we see from Exod. xxx. 16, that the gold was placed in the treasury of the tabernacle.

Learn, that God is graciously pleased to accept the offerings of humble and grateful hearts. (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) No prince ever returns safe out of a battle, but may well remember how many blows and bullets have gone by him, that might easily have gone through him; and by what little, odd, unforeseen chances death has been turned aside, which seemed in a full, ready, and direct career, to have been posting to him. All which passages, if we do not acknowledge to have been guided to their respective ends and effects by the conduct of a superior and a Divine Hand, we do by the same assertion cashier all Providence, strip the Almighty of His noblest prerogative, and make God, not the Governor, but the mere Spectator of the world.—*Dr. South.*

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 341. (c)

(c) Objects seem large or little according to the medium through which they are viewed. In the microscope, what a remarkable change they undergo! The humble moss rises into a graceful tree; the beetle, armed for battle, flashes in golden or silver mail; a grain of sand swells into a mass of rock; and, on the other hand, a mountain looked at through the wrong end of a telescope sinks into a mole hill, and the broad lake into a tiny pool. Even so, according as we look at them, with the eyes of self-condemning humility, or of self-righteous pride, God's mercies seem great or little. For example, a minister of the Gospel passing one day near a cottage, was attracted to its door by the sound of a loud and earnest voice. It was a bare and lonely dwelling; the home of a man who was childless, old, and poor. Drawing near this mean and humble cabin, the stranger at length made out these words, "This, and Jesus Christ too! this, and Jesus Christ too!"

as they were repeated over and over again in tones of deep emotion, of wonder, gratitude, and praise. His curiosity was roused to see what that could be which called forth such fervent, overflowing thanks. Stealing near, he looked in at the patched and broken window; and there in the form of a grey, bent, worn-out son of toil, at a rude table, with hands raised to God, and his eyes fixed on some crusts of bread and a cup of water, sat piety, peace, humility, contentment, exclaiming, "This, and Jesus Christ too!"—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 101, 117, 342.

(e) It is well to feel that whatever good your gift may do to the Church, or the poor, or the sick, it is twice as much benefit to you to give it. It is well to give, because you love to give; as the flower which pours forth its perfume because it never dreamed of doing otherwise; or like the bird which quivers with song, because it is a bird, and finds a pleasure in its notes; or like the sun, which shines, not by constraint, but because, being a sun, it must shine; or like the waves of the sea, which flash back the brilliance of the sun because it is their nature to reflect and not to hoard the light! Oh, to have such grace in our hearts that we shall joyfully make sacrifices unto our God!—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) On our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a four-penny piece with a hole in it; they like to do it to show their love; and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in heaven. What are our Sunday-school teachings and

our preachings, and all that, but these cracked fourpenny pieces? Just nothing at all; but the Lord allows us to do His work for His own love's sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him.—*Ibid.*

The other day, in walking down the street, a little beggar boy, having discovered that I loved flowers, came and put into my hand a faded little sprig which he had somewhere found. I did not look directly at the scrawny, withered branch, but beheld it through the medium of the boy's heart, seeing what he would have given, not what he gave; and so looking, the shrivelled stem was laden with blossoms of beauty and odour. And if I, who am cold, and ignorant, receive so graciously the offering of a poor child, with what tender joy must our heavenly Father receive the sin-

cere tribute of His creatures, when He looks through the medium of His infinite love and compassion? . . . Christ does not say, "Take the noblest things of life, and bring them perfect to Me, and I will receive them." He says, "Take the lowest and most disagreeable thing; and if you bring it cheerfully for My sake, it shall be to Me a flower of remembrance, and I will press it in the Book of Life, and keep it for ever." Go, then, search for flowers to bring to Christ; and if you cannot find even road-side or pasture weeds—if there are only nettle and briars, and you are willing for His sake to thrust your hand into the thorn bush and bring a branch from thence, He will take it lovingly, and cherish it evermore.—*H. W. Beecher.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the account of the allotment of the territory conquered by Israel on the east of the Jordan to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Verse 1. *Jazer* (see on chap. xxi. 32).

Gilead, "a mountainous region east of the Jordan; bounded on the north by Bashan, on the east by the Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Gen. xxxi. 21; Deut. iii. 12-17)."—*Bibl. Dict.*

A place for cattle; a district of "rich pasture land, with shady forests, and copious streams."—*Ibid.*

Verse 3. *Ataroth*, &c. (see on verses 34-38).

Verses 8-13 (see chaps. xiii. and xiv.).

Verse 8. *Kadesh-barnea* (see on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 9. *Eshcol* (see on chap. xiii. 23).

Verse 17. *Go ready armed*. Keil and Del.: "Equip ourselves hastily."

Verse 23. *Be sure your sin will find you out*. "Lit.: 'Know ye of your sin that it will find you out.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 28. *Moses commanded Eleazar*, &c. (comp. chap. xxxiv. 17-29).

Verse 33. *And unto half the tribe of Manasseh*. "The participation of this half-tribe in the possession is accounted

for in ver. 39."—*O. v. 'Gerlach* (see also Josh. xvii. 1). At this time Moses only gave to the two tribes and a half a general promise of this country. The determination of their respective allotments, and the taking possession of them, was not effected until some time afterwards.

Verses 34-36. Places restored and fortified by the Gadites.

Verse 34. *Dibon* (see on chap. xxi. 30).

Ataroth—"crowns," probably identical with the ruins Attarus, on Jebel Attarus, and seven miles north-west of Dibon.

Aroer—"ruins," now in ruins and called Arâir, upon the very edge of the precipitous north bank of the ravine through which the Arnon flows. Not to be confounded with "Aroer that is before Rabbah" (Josh. xiii. 25).

Verse 35. *Atroth, Shopan*. This should be written Atroth-Shophan; Shopan being added to distinguish it from the Ataroth of the preceding verse. The situation has not been identified.

Jaazer, or *Jazer* (see on chap. xxi. 32).

Joybehah, now in ruins and called Jebeihah, seven miles north-west of Jazer.

Verse 36. *Beth-nimrah*—"house of

sweet water;" in ver. 3 contracted into Nimrah; situated five miles north of Libias; now in ruins and called Nahr Nimrin, where the waters of the Wady Shoaib enter the Jordan.

Beth-haran, the same as *Beth-aram*, which should be *Beth-haram* (Josh. xiii. 27). Herod Antipas named it *Libias*, in honour of *Livia*, the wife of Augustus Cæsar. It is now in ruins, and is called *Rameh*; situated not far from the mouth of the Wady Heshbân.

Verses 37, 38. Places restored and fortified by the Reubenites.

Verse 37. *Heshbon* (see on chap. xxi. 25).

Elealeh, now called *El-A'al*, a little more than a mile north-east of *Heshbon*.

Kirjathaim, was probably situated three miles south of *Heshbon*, where the ruins of *et-Teym* are now found.

Verse 38. *Nebo*, a town on or near *Pisgah*, in the mountains of *Abarim* (see chap. xxi. 20). "A ruined village of the name *Neba* has been mentioned by travellers as still existing in those parts, and from the latest account seems to be on the most elevated of the crests" of *Pisgah*, "due west of *Baal-meon*, and three miles south-west of *Heshbon*."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Baal-meon, called *Beon* in ver. 3; *Beth-Baal-meon* in Josh. xiii. 17, and *Beth-meon* in Jer. xlviii. 23, was probably about two miles south-east of *Heshbon*, where the ruins of *Myun* are now found.

Shibmah, more correctly *Sibmah* (Isa. xvi. 8), probably four miles east of *Heshbon*, and now marked by the ruins *es-Sameh*. "All the places built by the Reubenites were but a short distance from *Heshbon*, and surrounded this capital. . . . The insertion of the

words *their names being changed*, before *Shibmah*, is an indication that the latter place did not receive any other name. Moreover, the new names which the builders gave to these towns did not continue in use long, but were soon pressed out by the old ones again."—*Keil and Del.*

And gave other names, &c. Margin: "Heb., 'they called by names the names of the cities.'" "A roundabout way of saying, they called the towns by (other, or new) names."—*Ibid.*

Verse 39. *Machir the son of Manasseh* (comp. Gen. i. 23).

Went. Rather "had gone." "The imperfects in ver. 39 are to be understood in the sense of pluperfects."—*Keil and Del.*

Gilead. "More strictly part of north *Gilead*" (comp. Deut. iii. 13).

Verse 41. *Jair the son of Manasseh*. "Jair was the grandson of a daughter of *Machir the son of Manasseh*, and therefore a great-grandson of *Manasseh* on the mother's side. His father, *Segub*, was the son of *Hezron* of the tribe of *Judah*, who had married a daughter of *Manasseh* (1 Chron. ii. 21, 22); so that *Jair*, or rather *Segub*, had gone over with his descendants unto the maternal tribe, contrary to the ordinary rule, and probably because *Machir* had portioned his daughter with a rich dowry like an heiress."—*Keil and Del.*

Took the small towns (comp. Deut. iii. 14).

Havoth-jair—villages of *Jair*.

Verse 42. *Nobah*. This is the only mention of him in the Scriptures.

Kenath. Now "*Kenawât*, a ruined town at the southern extremity of the *Lejah*, about 20 miles north of *Bûsrah*."—*Bibl. Dict.*

THE SELFISH REQUEST OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 1-5.)

This request exhibits—

I. Mean selfishness.

It is marked by an utter absence of

regard for the interests of others. These two tribes think and plan, and petition solely for themselves. In the competi-

tions of business and of professional and social life there is often very much of mean selfishness, and that even amongst persons who are avowedly Christians. But selfishness is utterly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ; and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (a)

II. Predominant worldliness.

"Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle," &c. (ver. 1). The one consideration which actuated them was this, "The country is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle." They had no care for the unity and prosperity of the nation. Their *patriotism* utterly succumbed to the force of their worldliness. They had no solicitude as to the relation of the coveted country to the institutions of national worship. *Religion* was not sufficiently strong in them to bear up against their eagerness for worldly gain. They resembled Lot in this respect, that they had so keen an eye for worldly gain as to be almost blind to every other consideration (comp. Gen. xiii. 10-13). In this day there are many, who regard themselves as Christians, who resemble the Reubenites and Gadites,—many who are chiefly influenced by temporal and worldly considerations in (1) the selection and conduct of their business; (2) the formation of matrimonial alliances; and (3) the determination of their residence. Temporal gain, social surroundings, salubrity of atmosphere, and similar things, are often deeply considered, while sacred and spiritual things are well-nigh overlooked. (b)

III. Disregard of the interests and rights of their brethren.

They manifest no concern for the settlement of their brethren of the other tribes in suitable inheritances; and silently they ignore their equal claim to the country which they sought for themselves. The brethren whom the Reubenites and Gadites thus disregarded had shared with them all the toils, hardships, and dangers of the battles by which the land they sought for themselves had been secured; but in

their selfishness the two tribes pay no heed to this fact. The tendency of selfishness is to produce disregard of the claims of others, which is often most unjust. (c)

IV. Disparagement of their Divine calling and destiny.

"Let this land be given unto thy servants," &c. (ver. 5). Contrast their, "Bring us not over Jordan," with the fervent prayer of Moses, "O Lord God, I pray Thee, let me go over," &c. (Deut. iii. 25). If they did not actually despise the glorious destiny which had been the hope of their ancestors for ages previous, yet they grievously depreciated it. What vast numbers practically despise their exalted spiritual calling in the Gospel for the passing and perishing things of this world!

V. Want of faith in the Divine promise.

It is not improbable that they had their doubts as to their taking the good land beyond Jordan, and therefore sought to secure for themselves what the nation had already conquered. Such unbelief is a grievous dishonour to God.

Conclusion.

Mark the *folly* of this request of the Reubenites and Gadites. The country which they desired had very grave disadvantages. It was most exposed to the attacks of their enemies; and it was very difficult of united and successful defence, because the Jordan to some extent cut them off from the great bulk of their nation. Their position very speedily gave rise to misunderstanding between them and their brethren on the other side of Jordan. Their association with heathen neighbours led them into idolatry; and they were the first of the Israelites that were carried into captivity (1 Chron. v. 25, 26). How foolish did Lot's choice of Sodom prove! (Gen. xiv. 12; xix. 15-26). He who renounces spiritual and eternal advantages for material and temporal prosperity makes a fool's choice. "For what is a man profited?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). A selfish policy is generally a self-defeating policy. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) What amazing selfishness visibly appears in the general conduct of mankind, and how little are they, amidst all the culture of education and humanity, all the restraints of law, and all the illuminations, injunctions, and threatenings of religion, disposed to act agreeably to the dictates of truth, righteousness, and benevolence towards each other! A little prosperity, a little power, a very humble office, or some other trifling object of ambition, will at any time make those who have been for life bosom friends, vehement and irreconcilable enemies. In the common bargains between men, again, how rarely is it the design to exchange an equivalent for that which is received, although the only possible rule of honesty; and how generally to make what is called a good, and what is in reality a fraudulent, bargain. How many persons obtain their whole living, and spend their whole lives, in this kind of fraud! What pains are taken to conceal or belie the state of the markets! of our own circumstances, our real intentions, or our ability to fulfil the engagements into which we enter! What base deceptions are practised in cases of bankruptcy; and what frauds perpetrated in order to attain legally the character and immunities of a bankrupt! How difficult has it been even to make a law which can at all secure to creditors an equitable share in the actual remains of a bankrupt's property! How strange would these observations appear in a world of honest, virtuous beings.—*Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

I warn every aspirant for wealth against the infernal canker of selfishness. It will eat out of the heart with the fire of hell, or bake it harder than a stone. The heart of avaricious old age stands like a bare rock in a bleak wilderness, and there is no rod of authority, no incantation of pleasure, which can draw from it one crystal drop to quench the raging thirst for satisfaction.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) There are business men in our city to-day who have schemed for a future which, if analysed, would disclose nothing but a careful regard for personal and domestic comfort. I can give you the brief programme of such men; it runs after this fashion—Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements. I thought I could have mentioned a fifth object of pursuit, but I believe this exhausts the whole scheme. Now it is for them to say whether they will persist in urging this request. They are at perfect liberty to leave the City, to abandon the poor, to get away from all that is fetid, noisome, and otherwise offensive; but let them beware lest, in reaching the supposed heaven, they find that they have gone in the wrong direction, and that where they expected heaven to begin they find that they have only reached the outward edge of earth. Men who make arrangements exclusively with a view to physical comfort never

ask the questions which are the chief inquiries of souls that truly live. They do not say, What kind of preaching shall we have in the locality to which we propose to move? What scholastic advantages will be available? What libraries will be accessible? No! What they want is Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements—and they get them; but the fruit which they had coveted so eagerly turns to ashes in their mouths.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 166

(c) You would be indignant if you saw a strong man walk into a theatre or lecture-room, and calmly choosing the best place, take his feeble neighbour by the shoulder, and turn him out of it into the back seats or the streets. You would be equally indignant if you saw a stout fellow thrust himself up to a table where some hungry children were being fed, and reach his arm over their heads and take their bread from them. But you are not the least indignant if, when a man has stoutness of thought and swiftness of capacity, and, instead of being long-armed only, has the much greater gift of being long-headed—you think it perfectly just that he should use his intellect to take the bread out of the mouths of all the other men in the town who are of the same trade with him; or use his breadth and sweep of sight to gather some branch of the commerce of the country into one great cobweb, of which he is himself to be the central spider, making every thread vibrate with the points of his claws, and commanding every avenue with the facets of his eyes. You see no injustice in this.—*John Ruskin, M.A.*

(d) It is a singular thing this: That men by grasping lose; that by scraping they get nothing; that by having great bunches of keys to lock up seven-fold doors they can't find what they have locked away—there must be some way inside from the back, some way spirits get into it—at all events the thing goes. God has many ways of turning selfish man's very success to failure and disappointment. The darkness, the mildew, the locust, the frost, the lightning, the winds, are His servants. Thou shalt carry much seed into the field and shalt gather but little in, for the locusts shall consume it. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." "Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied." How God mocks the bad man! How He can turn the wicked man's very success into failure, and how out of selfish ambition He can bring the scorpion whose sting is death.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE FAITHFUL REBUKE OF MOSES TO THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 6-15.)

In this rebuke Moses indicates—

I. The injustice of their proposal.

“Moses said unto the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?” Their request, or proposal, was unjust towards their brethren. Why should they have as their inheritance that country which all had assisted to conquer, and leave their brethren to conquer other possessions for themselves without their aid? But did Moses misinterpret their request as regards their intentions in this matter? Some think that he did, and that the Reubenites and Gadites intended to aid their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. This view of their conduct does not commend itself to our judgment; for, “when Moses reproved them, the speakers did not reply that they had not cherished the intention attributed to them, but simply restricted themselves to the promise of co-operation in the conquest of Canaan.” It is probable that, from “the rapid and easy defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og,” they had come to the conclusion “that the remaining ten tribes were quite strong enough to conquer the land of Canaan on the west of Jordan.” Whatever view may be taken of their request in this respect, they cannot be acquitted of a want of brotherly feeling, and of interest in the welfare of the nation as a whole; and, therefore, they deserved the rebuke which Moses addressed to them.

Selfishness gravitates towards injustice. (a)

II. The tendency of their proposal to dishearten their brethren.

“Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?” Their request was calculated to produce discouragement, because if it were granted it would be likely to—

1. *Reduce their numbers.* They would have fewer soldiers with which to conquer the land.

2. *Engender dissatisfaction.* The ten tribes would feel that they had reason for dissatisfaction and complaint.

In entering upon any course of public action, we are morally bound to consider what its probable effect will be on the community at large. “None of us liveth to himself.” (b)

III. The wickedness of their proposal.

“And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men,” &c. Their request was a sin against God, inasmuch as it involved—

1. *Unbelief of His word.* They doubted His promise to give them the good land.

2. *Depreciation of His goodness.* They practically disparaged the inheritance to which God had called them. (See the preceding homily, in which these points are noticed.) (c)

IV. The tendency of their proposal to call down the wrath of God.

1. *The cause of His anger.* “Ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord.” With awful intensity His wrath ever burns against sin. It is the “abominable thing which He hates.” (d)

2. *The expression of His anger.* “For if ye turn away from after Him, He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.” If the unworthy desires of the Reubenites and Gadites had spread to the other tribes, it would have been most just that God should exclude them from Canaan. The expressions of the Divine wrath are ever perfectly just and right.

3. *The subjects of His anger.* “All this people.” The sad consequences of sin are not confined to the actual transgressors. One member of a family sins,

and all the members suffer by reason of that sin. In the nation, one class or party pursues an evil course, and all classes or parties suffer loss or pain. An argument against sin. (e)

V. The solemn example by which Moses enforced his rebuke. (Verses 8-13.)

See our exposition of chapters xiii., xiv.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on *Injustice* see p. 550.

(b) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 428, 485.

(c) Illustrations on this point may be found on p. 252.

(d) God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility, inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword: he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and the deadworthy from the true and lifeworthy; making all human history, and the biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in the place of a Devil's Chaos. So it is in the end; even so

to every man who is a man, and not a mutinous beast, and has eyes to see.—*Thos. Carlyle*.

Other illustrations on the *Wrath of God* appear on pp. 220, 221.

(e) Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus:—"A vessel sailing from Joppa, carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth.'"

The ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

THE AMENDED PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 16-27.)

Our subject has three main branches—

I. The amended proposal made.

"And they came near unto him, and said, We will build," &c. (verses 16-19). The chief terms of the proposal are these—

1. *That they should provide at once for the safe settlement of their families and their flocks and herds.* "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones, and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land." A reasonable proposal: for it was their duty to look to the safety of their wives and little ones and possessions; and when this was done, they would be more free to go forth to the conquest of the land.

2. *That they would assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan.*

"We ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place." They would take their full share in the hardships and dangers which were to be encountered in taking the country.

3. *That they would not leave their brethren until that conquest was completely effected.* "We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance." They would not return unto their homes until their brethren ceased to require their services.

4. *That they would not seek for any inheritance with their brethren on the other side of the Jordan.* "We will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward." They would not seek for any additional territory as compensa-

tion for helping their brethren in their wars, but would be content with the inheritance for which they were now asking.

Such are the chief terms of the amended proposal of the Reubenites and the Gadites; and they are manifestly reasonable and equitable.

II. The amended proposal accepted.

"And Moses said unto them, if ye will do this," &c. (verses 20-24).

1. *Moses re-affirms the chief terms of their proposal.* He "said unto them, if ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over Jordan," &c. (verses 20-22). In this way he would impress them with the importance of the engagements they were making, and the solemnity of the obligations incurred by them.

2. *He accepts their proposal as righteous.* "Then afterwards ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep: and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth."

3. *He warns them that if they fail to faithfully fulfil its terms punishment will overtake them.* "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." "The guilt will

haunt you at heels, as a bloodhound, and the punishment will overtake you." Their sin would certainly bring its own punishment. (a)

III. The amended proposal confirmed.

"And the children of God and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. Our little ones," &c. (verses 25-27). And the proposal thus ratified was faithfully fulfilled (Josh. iv. 12, 13).

Lessons.

i. *The duty of manifesting a practical regard for the rights and interests of others.* "We are members one of another." "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26). It behoves us not merely to cultivate kind feelings towards others, but also to render practical help in the toils and trials of life. (b)

ii. *The importance of faithfully fulfilling the engagements into which we enter.* Our covenants we should always keep. Our promises should always be translated into performances. (c)

iii. *The delusiveness of the notion that any one can sin and escape the punishment of sin.* The penalty follows the transgression as an inevitable consequence. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vessel was going from Bassorah to Bagdad, the author of *Persian Stories* relates, with several passengers on board. In the course of the voyage the sailors, by way of a joke, put a man in irons, as he lay asleep, and he became a subject of diversion to the whole party till they drew near to the capital. But when the sailors wanted to let him loose the key was nowhere to be found, and after a long and fruitless search they were compelled to send for a blacksmith to knock off the fetters. When, however, the blacksmith came, he refused to do what they wanted till he had authority of the magistrate, for he thought the man might be some criminal whom the officers of justice had laid hold of, and that his friends wished to favour his escape. To the magistrate they accordingly went, who sent down one of his attendants to see into it. But the officer,

when he had heard their story, and had taken the evidence of some of the most respectable among the passengers, shook his head, and with a look of solemnity said it was much too serious a case for him to decide. So they repaired in a body to the magistrate, and carried the poor captive with them. So strange a procession was sure to attract notice, and a crowd soon collected about them, each curious to know the prisoner's offence, and to catch a sight of him; till at length one man, springing forward, seized the captive by the throat and exclaimed, "Here is the villain I have been looking for these two years, ever since he robbed and murdered my poor brother!" Nor would he quit his hold till they came before the magistrate, and the murder being clearly proved, the man who had been confined in joke only was given up to death, as punishment for the

blood he had shed.—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

Another illustration on this point is given on p. 90.

(b) "Two," says Solomon, "are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him who is alone when he falleth: for he hath not another to help him up." The cobbler could not paint the picture, but he could tell Apelles that the shoe latchet was not quite right, and the painter thought it well to take his hint. Two neighbours, one blind and the other lame, were called to a place at a great distance. What was to be done? The blind man could not see, and the lame man could not walk. Why, the blind man carried the lame one; the blind one assisted by his legs, the other by his eyes. Say to no one, then, "I can do without you;" but be ready to help those who ask your aid, and then, when it is needed, you may ask theirs. Mankind are so much indebted to one another, that they owe mutual attention.—*Anon.*

Man is not himself his own work; he is precisely the most wonderful piece of God's workmanship extant. In this best piece not only he is bound to take delight, but cannot, in a right state of thought, take delight in anything else, otherwise than through himself. Through himself, however, as the sun of creation, not as *the* creation. In himself, as the light of the world; not as being the world. Let him stand in his due relation to other creatures, and to inanimate things—know them all and love them, as made for him, and he for them; and he becomes himself the greatest and holiest of them. But let him cast off this relation, despise and forget the less creation round him, and instead of being the light of the world, he is as a sun in space—a fiery ball, spotted with storm.

All the diseases of mind leading to fatalest ruin consist primarily in this isolation. They are the concentration of man upon himself; whether his heavenly interests or his worldly interests, matters not; it is the being *his own* interests which makes the regard of them so mortal. Every form of asceticism on one side, of sensualism on the other, is an isolation of his soul or of his body; the fixing his thoughts upon them alone: while every healthy state of nations and of individual minds consists in the unselfish presence of the human spirit everywhere, energizing over all things; speaking and living through all things.—*John Ruskin, M.A.*

(c) When Justice North, afterwards the Lord Keeper Guildford, during one of his circuits, visited the Duke of Beaufort, at his princely seat at Badminton, the Lord Arthur, then a child about five years old, was very angry with the judge (he said) for hanging men. The judge replied, "that if they were not hung, they would kill and steal." "No," said the little boy, "you should make them promise upon their honour they would not do so, and then they would not." How delicate must the noble principle have been in the breast of this infant noble, and how rich a soil wherein to plant and to cherish it.—*Biblical Museum.*

I have somewhere met with an anecdote of Lord Chatham, who had promised that his son should be present at the pulling down of a garden wall. The wall was, however, taken down during his absence, through forgetfulness; but, feeling the importance of his word being held sacred, Lord Chatham ordered the workmen to rebuild it, that his son might witness its demolition, according to his father's promise.—*F. F. Trench.*

(d) Illustrations on this topic are given on pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

CONFLICT THE CONDITION OF ATTAINMENT, AND SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN.

(Verses 20-23.)

Old Testament histories are New Testament instructions. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime," &c. (Rom. xv. 4). They teach that human nature is the same in all ages; that God's government is the same, &c.

I. A truth to be confirmed—that those who would share in the inheritance must engage in the conflict.

In this warfare not to fight is to perish. To obtain the possession we must "go armed before the Lord to war." Life is a scene of conflict between the seed of the Serpent, &c.

1. *This is opposed to the thoughtless impiety of the worldling;* who, intent upon present objects, has no sympathy with the claims of Truth, the designs of God, or the conflicts of the Church.

They forget that in the great struggle always going on between truth and error, holiness and sin, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell, every man must take a part—for Christ against Satan, or for Satan against Christ. The moment that the life of faith begins, the fight of faith begins. We cannot put off our armour till we put on our

shroud. It was a striking saying of a celebrated captain: "There's the enemy; if you don't kill them, they will kill you."

They forget that this war, like that against Canaan, is divinely appointed. Six times in this connection it is stated that it was "before the Lord" they were to "go armed to war." The conflict was begun at His command; and not to end but with His permission.

Reuben and Gad are fitting types of worldly men. They had a fine eye for worldly gain. They would willingly engage with the warriors up to the point of securing their inheritance, and then fall back. Every unconverted man is a Reubenite at heart. For the world all eagerness, &c.

2. *This is opposed to the sinister and selfish designs of the hypocrite; who is always pursuing some secondary object. We are to guard against "all the deceits of the world."* Calvin, speaking of the Reubenites, thinks there was "much amiss in the principle they went upon, preferring their own ease to the Church's good, and having no such regard to the honour of God and the Covenant of Promise, as they ought to have had." Their request seemed to arise from contempt of the good land, or doubt of God's power to bring them through. It argued a culpable neglect of their brethren. But the men of Reuben, like other hypocrites, had other ends. No man acts on a single motive. Reuben had lost his birthright, and could not claim a first inheritance. Manasseh, though the elder, was always eclipsed and overshadowed by Ephraim, the recognised head of ten tribes. And Gad had a blot on his escutcheon, being descended from Zilpah, Leah's handmaid. Each of these, therefore, had a reason for wishing an inheritance on that side the Jordan.

3. *As opposed to the baseness of the Antinomian; who is all for privilege, and nothing for obligation.*

II. A warning to be applied—that sin brings punishment; and that those who think to sin with impunity, under a dispensation of mercy, will find them-

selves fearfully disappointed. "Besure your sin will find you out."

No impression seems more common than the hope of escape; but none more fallacious. Some think they can stop at a certain point; others that they can skilfully conceal their transgression; or that they can repent in time. Sinning on a plan.

But the certain connexion between crime and punishment is part of the public creed of all nations. Hence the tendency to convert calamities into judgments. We look for and record any token of retributive justice, by which the consequences of men's actions are brought home to themselves.

1. *In the way of natural consequence.* The law that regulates the succession of the seasons is not more certain than that which regulates the just recompense of reward that follows sin. God who gives to every seed its own body, makes the harvest of guilt answerable to the seed time. The interval may be long, but the result is certain. The man who is undutiful to his parents, may be visited by the equal undutifulness of his own child. Jacob, who deceived Isaac, was himself deceived by Laban and Leah, and by his own sons. Agag, who made mothers childless, was slain by Samuel, and his mother made childless.

2. *In the way of Providential dispensation.* God sees sin wherever it exists: He is angry with the wicked. For sin He drowned one world, &c.

See it in guilty nations. The Jews crucified our Lord: they were crucified by the Romans in the siege, &c. The Roman emperors persecuted the Christians: they themselves came to untimely deaths. Spain founded the Inquisition: she has been sunk to the level of a third-rate power. France persecuted the Huguenots: she has been a hot-bed of revolutions.

See it in guilty men. Cain, Joseph's brethren, Gehazi, Achan, David.

3. *In the way of final retribution.*

III. A personal application to be made.

Samuel Thodey.
555

THE CERTAINTY THAT SIN WILL FIND US OUT.

(Verse 23.)

The fear of punishment, if not the best, is certainly the most common preservative from sin. Under the Mosaic dispensation, it was the principal motive with which the Divine commands were enforced. Nor did St. Paul think it wrong to "persuade men by the terrors of the Lord." Consider—

I. In what manner we have sinned against the Lord.

It would be useless to attempt an enumeration of all the sins we have committed.

1. We shall confine ourselves to *that view of them which the context suggests*. The sin against which Moses cautioned the two tribes was unfaithfulness to their engagements; and a preferring of their present ease to the executing of the work which God had assigned them. Now, we promised to renounce the world, &c., but how have we kept the covenant which we solemnly entered into? &c.

2. *But the sin referred to in the text will scarcely bear any comparison with ours*. The Israelites were to maintain a warfare with men; we with the devil (Eph. vi. 11, 12). They were to fight for an earthly portion; we, an heavenly (1 Cor. ix. 25). They might have urged that *their* aid was unnecessary when God was engaged; and that after all the prize was an inadequate reward for such fatigue and danger. But can we hope to conquer without exerting our own powers? Or can we say that the prize held out to us is not worth the contest? If our engagements be more solemn, our work more noble, and our reward more glorious than theirs, our sin in disregarding all must be proportionably greater. Yet who amongst us must not confess that he has forgotten all his vows? Then we may say to all, "Ye have sinned against the Lord."

II. What assurance we have that our sin shall find us out.

1. *Sin may be said to find us out when it brings down the Divine judgments*

upon us. Conscience, stupefied or scared, often forgets to execute its office; nor speaks till God, by His providence or grace, awaken it. Sometimes years elapse before it reproves our iniquities (Gen. xlii. 21, 22). Sometimes it testifies to our face as soon as our sin is committed (Matt. xxvi. 74, 75; xxvii. 3, 4). Whenever it thus condemns us, our sins may be said to find us out. But the expression in the text imports rather the visitation of God for sin. There is a punishment annexed to every violation of God's law (Ezek. xviii. 4). And sin then finds us out effectually when it brings that punishment upon us.

2. *That it will find us out, we have the fullest possible assurance.* (1) *The perfections of God's nature* absolutely preclude all hope of impunity. If He be omnipresent, He must see; if omniscient, remember; if holy, hate; and if just, punish the violations of His law. If He be possessed of veracity and power, He must execute the judgments He has denounced. (2) *The declarations of His Word* abundantly confirm this awful truth (Psa. xxi. 8; Prov. xi. 21; Isa. iii. 11; Rom. ii. 6, 9). Sin leaves a track which can never be effaced; and evil, however slow-paced, will surely overtake it (Psa. cxl. 11; Prov. xiii. 21). However scoffers may exult in their security, their ruin is fast approaching (Deut. xxix. 19, 20; 2 Pet. ii. 3; iii. 4, 9). (3) *The remarkable instances of sin being detected and punished in this world* afford strong additional testimony (Josh. vii. 14-18; 2 Sam. xii. 9-12; 2 Kings v. 26, 27). How much more then shall the most hidden things be brought to light hereafter! (4) *The appointment of a day of final retribution* puts the matter beyond a possibility of doubt (Eccles. xii. 14). We may, then, say to every sinner, "Be sure your sin," &c.

INFER—

i. *How earnest should we be in search-*

ing out our own sins! (Psa. l. 21; Luke xiii. 3.)

ii. *How thankful should we be that a way of escape is provided for us!* The Man Christ Jesus is an hiding place from the impending storm. Every perfection of Deity is pledged to save a believing penitent (1 John i. 9). We are confirmed in this hope by the most

positive declarations of Scripture (Isa. xlv. 22; Mic. vii. 18, 19; Heb. viii. 12). We have most authentic and astonishing instances of sin forgiven (2 Sam. xii. 13; Luke vii. 47; xxiii. 43). Let this blessed assurance encourage us to take refuge under the Saviour's wings (Matt. xxiii. 37).—*C. Sineon, M.A.*

THE SELF-RETRIBUTIVE NATURE OF SIN.

(Verse 23.)

“Be sure your sin will find you out.”

The text teaches the solemn and admonitory truth that sin carries with it its own punishment, which will eventually seize upon the sinner. This truth is confirmed by—

I. The germinal character of human actions.

Every action of life resembles a seed, which brings forth fruit after its kind. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;” &c. (a)

II. The exercise of memory.

In the exercise of its retentive function, memory holds all the sins we have ever committed; and in the exercise of its reproductive function, it may at any moment bring them forth, an awful procession, in clear and terrible aspects. Memory is “the bane of the wicked;” for it torments them by vividly appalling representations of their evil deeds. In this way the sin overtakes and smites the sinner. (b)

III. The operations of conscience.

The awakening of conscience to a sense of its guilt is the kindling of a hell within the breast from which there is no escape, except through the Cross of Christ. Guilt made Macbeth, the noble and brave soldier, cry out:—

“How is't with me when every noise appals me!”

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth.” “The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them: and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall

fall when none pursueth.” “Terrors take hold on him as waters.”

“That pang where more than madness lies!

The worm that will not sleep, and never dies.
Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night,

That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light:

That winds around, and tears the quivering heart,

Ah! wherefore not consume it and depart?”

—*Byron.* (c)

IV. The power of habit.

“Habit,” says Sir W. Hamilton, “is formed by the frequent repetition of the same action, or passion, and this repetition is called *consuetude*, or *custom*.”

“All habits gather by unseen degrees,
As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas.”

—*Dryden.*

“Habit is at first like a spider's web; if neglected, it becomes a thread of twine; next, a cord or rope, and eventually a *cable*; and then who can break it?” “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” (d)

Conclusion—

i. *Warning against sin.* Let the certainty of its punishment deter you from the commission of sin.

ii. *Motive to trust in Christ.* Through Him we may obtain forgiveness of sin, cleansing from its stains, and freedom from its power.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This topic is illustrated on pp. 89, 265, 481.

(b) I knew a man who said, that in falling twenty feet, when he expected to die, the thoughts of a lifetime seemed to pass through his mind. He thought of his business, of his wife, of his children, and of that eternity to which he was going. A life seemed to pass through his mind, and nothing was lost. So it will be when memory summons the acts of a life at the last tribunal. Nothing is lost. Thoughts once impressed, but apparently lost, will come *ex* gain. A life is written on our memory, with invisible ink. It is apparently lost to our frail sight while here; but, in the judgment light, it will be seen enveloped around us, and will be unrolled till every line and letter is made visible. I knew a sailor once, who said, that when in a storm, on the giddy mast, while trying to furl a sail, and could not, he cursed God. It passed out of his mind for twenty years; but then, in a season of excitement, he said, "Now I remember it. I am lost."—*H. W. Beecher*.

Let a man try to forget any dreadful thing, of which he hates the remembrance, and the more he tries to forget it, the more surely he remembers it, the more he bodies it forth, and every thrust he makes at it causes it to glare up anew, reveals some new horror in it. Doubtless, this peculiarity in our mental constitution is destined to play a most terrific part in the punishment of men's sins in eternity; for there can be nothing so dreadful as the remembrance of sin, and nothing which men will strive with more intense earnestness to hide from and forget, than the recollection of their sins; and yet every effort they make at such forgetfulness only gives to such sins a more terrible reality, and makes them blaze up in a more lurid light to the conscience. Oh, if they could but be forgotten! But the more intense is the earnestness of this wish, the more impossible becomes the forgetfulness, the more terribly the dreaded evil stands out. There are cases, even in this life, in which men would give ten thousand worlds, if they possessed them, could they only forget; but how much more in eternity! The man that has committed a secret midnight murder, how often, think you, though perhaps not a human being suspects it, would he give the riches of the material universe, if he had them at command, could he but forget that one moment's crime! But it is linked to his very constitution; and every time he tries to cut the chain, he does but rattle and rouse the crime out of its grave into a new existence.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

Will no remorse, will no decay,
O Memory, soothe thee into peace?
When life is ebbing fast away,
Will not thy hungry vultures cease?

Ah, no! as weeds from fading free,
Noxious and rank, yet verdantly

Twine round a ruined tower;
So to the heart, untamed, will cling
The memory of an evil thing

In life's departing hour:
Green is the weed when grey the wall,
And thistles rise while turrets fall.

Yet open Memory's book again—

Turn o'er the lovelier pages now,
And find that balm for present pain

Which past enjoyment can bestow:
Delusion all, and void of power!
For e'en in thought's serenest hour,

When past delights are felt,
And Memory shines on scenes of woe,
'Tis like the moonbeam on the snow,

That gilds, but cannot melt;
That throws a mocking lustre o'er,
But leaves it cheerless as before.

—*J. A. Heraud.*

(c) My dream was lengthened after life;
O, then began the tempest to my soul!

I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,
With that grim ferryman which poets write of
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.

The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,

Who cried aloud—*What scourge for perjury
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?*

And so he vanished: Then came wand'ring by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood; and he shrieked out aloud,
Clarence is come,—false, fleeting, perjured

*Clarence—
That stab'd me in the field by Tewkesbury;
Seize on him, furies, take him to your torments!*
With that, methought, a legion of foul fiends
Environed me, and howled in mine ears
Such hideous cries, that, with the very noise,
I trembling waked, and, for a season after,
Could not believe but that I was in hell;
Such terrible impression made my dream.

I have done these things
That now give evidence against my soul.

—*Shakespeare, Richard III. i. 4.*

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the dirt'st degree;
All several sins, all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all—*Guilty! guilty!*
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And, if I die, no soul will pity me—
Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself.
Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

—*Ibid. v. 3.*

(d) Here is a young man who says, "I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it is exhilarating. It makes me feel well. I can talk better, think better, feel better. I cannot see why people have such a prejudice against it." A few years pass on, and he wakes up, and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which

he tries to break, but cannot; and he cries out, "O Lord God, help me!" It seems as though God would not hear his prayer, and in agony of body and soul he cries out, "It biteth like a serpent, and it stingeth like an adder." How bright it was at the start! how black it was at the last!—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

SIN WILL COME TO LIGHT.

(Verse 23.)

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Men, when they commit sin, wish to think that they are done with the thing for ever. Few succeed in convincing themselves of this huge error; but some do think that the Most High doth not regard, and will never call them to account. Others think that the day of God's dealing with them will not come till by some means, not sanctioned by Scripture, not approved by sound reason, they will make all right. In many ways sinners practise deceit on themselves and harden themselves in iniquity. Men are not done with sin when they have committed it. After sin comes a dread account. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

I. God certainly shows His purpose to punish sin by the way He causes woe to come on some sinners here.

The drunkard, the glutton, and the cheat, the liar and the lewd, are not the only examples. Most frauds are exposed. Nearly all murders are brought to light. Men may plot very secretly, and think their crimes are hid. But Providence calls on stones and beams of timber, on tracks and pieces of paper, to be witnesses of the crime. Then all that class of sins which are not punishable by human laws, God often punishes with a loss of respect, esteem, or confidence. After twenty-four years of concealment, Joseph's brethren are brought to feel and say that God had found out their iniquity. Ibycus, a famous Grecian poet, was going to Corinth. Robbers attacked and murdered him. As he was falling and dying, he looked around to see if

there were no witnesses; no avengers. All he could see was a flock of cranes high in the air. He called on them to avenge his blood. You may think that was an idle call. The robbers thought so. They got their prey, and came to Corinth. They went to the open theatre. As they sat there, they looked up and saw above them a flight of cranes, and one scoffingly said, "Lo, there are the avengers of Ibycus." The words were heard by some one near them. Already fears of the poet's safety began to be common. The gang, on being questioned, betrayed themselves, and *The Cranes of Ibycus* became a proverb, like that we have in English, *Murder will out*.

II. Men might be sure that their sin will find them out by the sore judgments which God sometimes sends on men for their sins.

On this matter we should exercise candour, caution, and charity, and not call that an angry judgment which is but a dark doing of love. Still there are on earth sore and marked judgments. Look at the history of Achan, of Korah, &c. Of thirty Roman Emperors, Proconsuls, and high officials, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and rage against the early Christians, it is recorded that one became speedily deranged after an act of great cruelty; one was slain by his own son; one became blind; the eyes of one started out of his head; one was drowned; one was strangled; one died in a miserable captivity; one fell dead in a manner that will not bear to be told: one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians

were put to death, because they could not abide the stench that filled his room; two committed suicide; a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the bloody work; five were assassinated by their own servants or people; five others died the most horrible deaths, having many and strange diseases; and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. Men have more to do with sin than to commit it.

III. One may escape detection and strange judgments, and still his sins may find him out in the fears, and clamours, and remorse of conscience.

Remorse is remorseless. Like fire, it burns all around it. No man can protect himself against his sins flashing him in the face at any moment. The Bible, preaching, singing, praying, a marriage, a trial in court, the sight of the man he has injured, or one that looks like him, or anything may arouse his conscience into fury at the most inconvenient time.

IV. But even if one escape all these things, yet if he dies unpardoned his sins will find him out in the next world.

Luke xii. 2; 1 Tim. v. 24; Eccles. x. 20.

Why do not men admit the force of these truths, and act accordingly? The reasons are very clear.

1. *Some think their sins will not find them out because God has not yet called them to account* (Eccles. viii. 11). Such men forget that with the Lord one day is "as a thousand years," &c. (2 Pet. iii. 8-10).

2. *In this world sinners often forget their sins, and think God has also forgotten them* (Ps. x. 11). But God forgets nothing.

3. *Some think their sin will not find them out because they doubt whether God is holy and just, and whether He takes notice of human actions* (Ps. xciv. 5-7). But that is practical atheism (Prov. xv. 3; Eccles. xii. 14).

4. *Some think their sin will not find them out because God is merciful.* But mercy slighted and rejected can save no man. All the cooling fountains can do no good to him who does not drink them.

O sinner, "be sure your sin will find you out." You may now live in ease and in error. You may now harden your heart in pride. But you must meet your sins at God's tribunal. Remember that. O be wise, be wise unto salvation. — *W. S. Plumer, D.D.*

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARRYING OUT THE PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 28-42.)

In these verses there are several things which require a brief notice.

I. The arrangements made by Moses for carrying out the agreement into which he had entered with the Reubenites and Gadites.

1. *His command to Eleazar and Joshua.* "Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun," &c. (vers. 28-30). Knowing that before the engagements could be fulfilled he would "be gathered unto his people," he charges the authorities of the nation to carry them out.

2. *His grant of the land to the two and*

a half tribes. "Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben," &c. Thus he provides as carefully and completely as possible for the fulfilment of the agreement into which, as the head of the nation, he had entered. Learn from the conduct of Moses—

i. *That men drawing near to the close of life should provide for the fulfilment of the engagements which they have made.* It behoves them "to set their house in order," &c. (comp. 2 Kings xx. 1).
(a)

ii. *That men should not enter into en-*

agements for the fulfilment of which they are unable to make provision.

II. The renewal of the promise of the Reubenites and Gadites.

"And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered," &c. Here are two considerations—

1. *The engagement which they renew.* They pledge themselves, for the third time, to do the will of Jehovah by aiding their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. "As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do," &c.

2. *The object which they had in view in renewing the engagement.* "That the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours."

III. The bestowment upon the half tribe of Manasseh of northern Gilead and Bashan.

"And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh," &c. (vers. 40-42). This half tribe of Manasseh had not asked for their inheritance east of the Jordan. Wherefore, then, was it assigned to them there? Of the three tribes "who had elected to remain on that side of the Jordan, Reuben and Gad had chosen their lot because the country was suitable to their pastoral possessions and tendencies. But Machir, Jair, and Nobah, the sons of Manasseh, were no shepherds. They were pure warriors, who had taken the most prominent part in the conquest of those provinces which up to that time had been conquered, and whose deeds are constantly referred to (ver. 39; Deut. iii. 13-15) with credit and renown. 'Jair the son of Manasseh took all the tract of Argob. . . . sixty great cities' (Deut. iii. 14; 4). 'Nobah took Kenath, and the daughter towns thereof, and called it after his own name' (ver. 42). 'Because Machir was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan' (Josh. xvii. 1). The district which these ancient warriors

conquered was among the most difficult, if not the most difficult, in the whole country. It embraced the hills of Gilead, with their inaccessible heights and impassable ravines, and the almost impregnable tract of Argob, which derives its modern name of *Lejah* from the secure 'asylum' it affords to those who take refuge within its natural fortifications" (*Bibl. Dict.*). Thus their inheritance may have been assigned to them there—

1. *As an acknowledgment of their bravery.* The words of ver. 39 suggest this, "The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had gone to Gilead, and taken it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. And Moses gave Gilead," &c.

2. *As a precaution for the common safety.* The occupation of this frontier country by these bold and valiant warriors would tend to promote the security of the nation. Moses might have had this in view in settling them there.

IV. The alteration of the names of the places.

"Nebo and Baal-meon (their names being changed), and Shibmah; and gave other names unto the cities which they builded." The alteration of the names of the towns arose probably from—

1. *A desire not to mention the names of the heathen deities after which some of them were called.* Nebo and Baal are such names. The Israelites were commanded not to utter the name of false gods (Exod. xxiii. 13; Josh. xxiii. 7).

2. *A desire to perpetuate their own names.* "Nobah took Kenath, and called it Nobah, after his own name." "They call their lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11). Deep is the desire of men to be remembered on the earth when they have passed away from it for ever. (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on the *Fulfilment of promises* appear on p. 554.

In connection with the important subject of

preparation for death—for we have all to die, and the sooner we distinctly understand what it requires to do so honourably and safely, the

better,—allow me to mention, first, a wise and equitable arrangement of your temporal affairs. “Have you made your will?” There is an admirable tract with this title. I wish it were better known, and more generally read. He who has property that will survive him, and a family possessing indisputable claims on his remembrance, ought not to give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids, till he has made such a testamentary disposition of his estate as shall be to the honour of his Christian character, and save his family from contention, litigation, and strife, in the event of his removal.—*Thos. Raffles, D.D., LL.D.*

But not that way do all men make their departure. Men ought to have their worldly affairs settled, so that the executors and administrators will not be confounded; and so that what they have honestly earned be not scattered among those who have no right to it. If the sudden announcement should be made to you to-night, what would be the state of your families? Have you done all that you can to fit them for heaven? Could you feel, “Whatever I, as father or mother, could do, I have done. They will remember how I prayed for them and talked with them; and when they look at my picture, they will say: ‘That was a Christian parent. I want to go in the same way, and gain the same heaven’?”

The keys of this organ are twelve feet from the organ-pipes; but every time those keys are touched the pipes resound. So these parents are now exercising influences which will respond far on in the eternity of their children. If they play an anthem now, it will be an anthem then. If they play a dirge now, it will be a dirge for ever.—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(b) Various are the contrivances of vain men to have their names written on earth, and to procure, after their deaths, an imaginary immortality, for themselves and their families, in the memory and conversation of posterity; which is not often obtained; and, if obtained, is of no value; when, with less trouble, they might have had their names written in heaven, and have secured to themselves a blessed immortality, in the glorious kingdom of their Redeemer.—*Bp. Horne.*

“Some sink outright.

O’er them and o’er their names the billows close,

To-morrow knows not they were ever born.

Others a short memorial leave behind;

Like a flag floating when the bark’s engulfed,
It floats a moment, and is seen no more.

One Cæsar lives; a thousand are forgot.”

—*Young.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have a list of the places at which the Israelites encamped from their departure from Egypt unto their arrival at the Jordan (vers. 1-49), and directions as to the conquest and distribution of Canaan (vers. 50-56).

Verses 1 and 2, form the introduction to the list of encampments.

Verses 3. *Rameses*, a city in “the western part of the land of Goshen.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verses 4. *Buried*. “Rather, ‘were burying.’”—*Speaker’s Comm.*

Verses 5. *Succoth* — “booths” or “tents:” situated probably “nearly due east of Rameses, and fifteen miles distant in a straight line.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verses 6. *Etham*, which is in the edge of the wilderness. “It is reasonable to place Etham where the cultivable land ceases, near the *Seba Biâr*, or Seven Wells, about three miles from the wes-

tern side of the ancient head of the gulf.”—*Ibid.*

Verses 7. *Pi-hahiroth*. The word is most probably Egyptian, and signifies, “the bed of reeds.”

Baal-zephon, or “*Typhon*, a name of Baal as representative of the opposite of mundane order and harmony, or of the god ruling in winter”—(*Fuerst*). But Mr. Stuart Poole in *Bibl. Dict.* gives as its meaning “place of Zephon;” and he says, “We place Baal-zephon on the western shore of the gulf of Suez, a little below its head, which at this time was about thirty or forty miles northward of the present head.”

Migdol = “a tower.” Sometimes, a military watch-tower, or a look-out in a vineyard. “*Migdol* and *Baal-zephon*,” says Mr. Poole, “must have been opposite to one another, and the latter behind *Pi-hahiroth* with reference to the Israelites.”

Verses 8. *Wilderness of Etham*; “i.e.,

that part of the great wilderness of Shur which adjoined Etham."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Marah. "A satisfactory site has been found for Marah. Howarah, at the head of Wady Amarah, where even now caravans halt in their journey to Sinai, possessing a spring at times so bitter that neither men nor camels can drink of it."—*Alford.*

Elim "is generally acknowledged to be the present Wady Ghurundel, two and a-half hours S.E. of Mara, and even now a famous watering-place of the Arabs."—*Ibid.*

Verse 10. *By the Red Sea.* This "must almost certainly be at the descent of the Wady Taiyibeh on the sea, or in some portion of the plain of Mürkhah, before they again turned up into the mountains."—*Stanley.*

Verse 11. *Wilderness of Sin.* "The whole of this district between Elim and Sinai is probably the wilderness of Sin" (*Alford*). Knobel, however, maintains, and with him Keil agrees, "that the wilderness of Sin is the great sandy plateau Debbet er Rameh, between the desert of Et-Tih and Sinai. This plateau begins near Elim and stretches S. Eastwards towards the range in which Sinai must be included."—*Ibid.*

Verse 13. *Dophketh . . . Alush,* not mentioned in Exodus, were most probably situated somewhere in the northern portion of the wilderness of Sin; but their respective sites have not been identified.

Verse 14. *Rephidim*="rests" or "stays," was most probably situated in Wady Feiran (see *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 38-42).

Verse 15. *The wilderness of Sinai.* The Sinai of the Law was most probably the Räs Süfsäfeh, which is not a distinct mountain, but the northern portion of Jebel Müsa, and is thus described by Dean Stanley: "The cliff rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur, from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of 'the mount that

might be touched,' and from which the 'voice' of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain below." The people were most probably assembled in er-Râhah, "the most suitable spot imaginable for the assembling of many thousands of people. It is upwards of two miles long and half a mile broad" (see *Sinai and Pal.*, pp. 39-44; *Alford* on Exod. xix. 1; and *Dr. Smith's Bibl. Dict.* art. *Sinai*).

Verse 17. *Kibroth-hattaavah* (see on chap. xi. 34; p. 181).

Hazereth (see on chap. xi. 35, p. 181).

Verse 18. *Rithmah*, derived from *retem*, the broom plant, was in the desert of Paran (chap. xii. 16), and probably the same locality as "the Wady Abu Retemat, which is not very far to the south of Kadesh, 'a wide plain with shrubs and *retem*,' i.e., broom. This spot was well adapted for a place of encampment for Israel, which was so numerous that it might easily stretch into the desert of Zin, and as far as Kadesh" (chap. xiii. 21, 26).—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 19-36 give the names of the places of encampment "during the years of penal wandering. The determination of their position is difficult, because during the period there was no definite line of march pursued."—*Speaker's Comm.* "Of all the seventeen places not a single one is known, or can be pointed out with certainty, except Ezion-geber."—*Keil and Del.*

Rimmon-parez="the pomegranate of the breach." The locality has not been identified.

Verse 20. *Libnah*="whiteness." "Probably the Laban of Deut. i. 1, and situated on or near either the Elanitic gulf or the Arabah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *Rissah*="heaps of ruins." Probably identical with Rasa of the Roman tables, "32 Roman miles from Ailah (Elah), and 203 miles south of Jerusalem."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 22. *Kehelathah*="assembling." Nothing is known of the place.

Verse 23. *Mount Shapher*="bear

tiful mountain."—*Fuerst*. Perhaps "the hill now known as Jebel-esh-Shureif, about 40 miles north-west of Râs-el-Kâ'a, north-west of Ezion geber, and west or south-west of el-Beyâneh."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 24. *Haradah* = "place of terror."—*Fuerst*. "Probably Wady-el-Khâraizeh, about 15 miles south-east of Jebel-esh-Shureif."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 25. *Makheleth* = "Places of meeting." Unknown.

Verse 26. *Tahath* = "a depression or valley."—*Fuerst*. The site has not been identified.

Verse 27. *Tarah* = "station." Situation unknown.

Verse 28. *Mithcah* = "sweet fountain" (*Fuerst*); or "place of sweetness"—*Bibl. Dict.* Unknown.

Verse 29. *Hashmonah*. The meaning of this word is doubtful; it may be "fat" or "fertile soil." Probably it is the Heshmon of Josh. xv. 27, and identical with "the fountain Ain Hasb, in the north-west of the Arabah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 30. *Moseroth* = "place of chastisement."—*Fuerst*. In Deut. x. 6, we have the singular form of the word (*Moserah*) instead of the plural, as in this place. In that place it is said, "there Aaron died." Its site has not been identified.

Verse 31. *Bene-jaakan* = "the children of Jaakan" (see Gen. xxxvi. 27; 1 Chron. i. 42). In Deut. x. 6, "Beeroth (*i.e.* wells) of the children of Jaakan." There it is stated that "the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera;" whilst here, it is said, "they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Bene-jaakan." The two passages probably relate to different journeys. This one to a journey during the thirty-seven years of penal wanderings; and that in Deut. to the march in the fortieth year, when they journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor, where Aaron died (chap. xx. 22-29). Beeroth-bene-jaakan "may be identical with the wells of sweet water now known as el-Mayein, which lying up high among

the hills, more than 60 miles due west of Mount Hor, would be likely to be visited by the Israelites either immediately before or after their encampment at Moserah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 32. *Hor-hagidgad*. "If the initial letter be *Kheth* (as in Tex. Recep., Syr., and later Targum) the name will denote the cavern of Gidgad; if *He* (as some few MSS., Samaritan text, earlier Targ., LXX., Vulg. read) it will denote the summit of Gidgad. In Deut. x. 7, we read simply Gudgodah or Gudgod."—*Ibid*. The situation has not been identified.

Verse 33. *Jotbathah* = "goodness." "In Deut. x. 7, 'Jotbath (Heb. *Jotbathah*) a land of rivers of waters.' This place is perhaps to be identified with Wady Tabah, six miles south-west of the head of the Elanitic gulf; where is a broad plain running down to the sea, containing many palm trees and tamarisks, and well supplied with water."—*Ibid*.

Verse 34. *Ebronah*; "*i.e.* 'passage.' This station apparently lay on the shore of the Elanitic gulf, at a point where the ebb of the tide left a ford across. Hence the later Targum renders the word 'fords.'"—*Ibid*.

Verse 35. *Ezion Geber* = "the giant's back bone." "Ezion Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings ix. 26). Dean Stanley says, "There is nothing to fix the precise site of Ezion Geber." But it seems almost certain that it was at what was then the northern extremity of the Elanitic gulf, some miles north of the present head of the gulf, at Ain-el-Ghudyân.

Verse 36. *The wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh*. See on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21, 26; xx. 16.

Verse 37. *Mount Hor, &c.* See on chap. xx. 22.

Verses 37-40. See on chaps. xx. 22—xxi. 3.

Verses 41-43. *Zalmonah, . . . Punon, . . . Oboth*. See on chap. xxi. 10.

Verse 44. *Ije-abarim*. See on chap. xxi. 11.

Verse 45. *Dibon-gad*. See on chap. xxi. 30.

Verse 46. *Almon-diblathaim* is almost certainly identical with Beth-diblathaim mentioned by Jeremiah (xlviii. 22), in connection with Dibon and Nebo. Its site is unknown; but "it is to be sought for to the north or north-west of Dibon."

Verse 47. *The mountains of Abarim, before Nebo*, "is only another name for the 'valley of the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah.'" See on chap. xxi. 20.

Verse 48. *The plains of Moab, &c.* See on chap. xxii. 1.

Verse 49. *Beth-jesimoth* = "house of the wastes," a town situated on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea (Josh. xii. 3). Later it was allotted to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20).

Abel-shittim. See on chap. xxv. 1.

Verse 50—chap. xxxvi. 13. "This last portion of the book concludes the record of the long wandering of the

people by certain directions respecting that conquest and allotment of the Promised Land, with which the wandering terminated. These regulations are divided into two sections by the re-insertion at xxxv. 1 of the introductory formula with which xxxiii. 50 opens. Of these portions the former contains commands concerning (1) the extermination of the Canaanitish nations, xxxiii. 50-56; (2) the boundaries of the Promised Land, xxxiv. 1-15; (3) the names of the men who should allot the land, xxxiv. 16-29."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Pictures.* Rather, "idols of stone" (comp. Lev. xxvi. 1).

Molten images; "idols cast from brass."

High places, where altars were erected for the worship of idols.

THE ITINERARY OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

Moses kept this record of the marches and encampments of Israel "by the commandment of the Lord." There must, therefore, have been some good and sufficient reason for it. And it seems to us that it was intended for a memorial, which was calculated in many ways to benefit primarily the Israelites, but also all others who might make acquaintance with the history. It is probable that the history of every station and march had its suggestions for the instruction, or encouragement, or admonition of the people. Of many of these encampments we know nothing except the name; but of others we know something of the occurrences and events connected with them, and in these instances we shall endeavour to briefly point out their moral suggestions. The verses before us, which are the introduction to the record, lead us to consider its general uses, and these as suggested by the fact that it was commanded by God.

It was calculated to be useful as—

I. An incentive to gratitude to God.

His goodness and mercy to the Israelites are manifest throughout the entire history. They are especially seen in His—

1. *Emancipating them from bondage in Egypt.* "With a strong hand the Lord brought them out of Egypt."

2. *Repeatedly delivering them from their enemies.* From the Egyptians at the Red Sea, the Amalekites at Rephidim, the Canaanites at Arad, &c.

3. *Infallibly guiding them in their journeys.* "In the day time He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." "He led them forth by the right way," &c. (a)

4. *Constantly providing for them in the desert.* "He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food; He sent them meat to the full. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like the sand of the sea." "He clave the rocks in the

wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths;" &c. (b)

5. *Inviolably guarding them from dangers.* Excepting on those occasions when they forfeited His protection by their aggravated offences, He shielded them from the perils both of the desert through which they passed and of the enemies whom they encountered. (c)

The record which, by suggestion, reminded them of so much goodness and mercy, was eminently adapted to inspire their warm and deep gratitude to Him from whom these blessings flowed. And can we survey the path of our pilgrimage without discovering many and cogent reasons for gratitude to God? "What shall I render unto the Lord?" &c. "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" &c. (d)

II. An encouragement to obey and trust God.

The history makes it clearly manifest that in obedience to the Divine will Israel realized peace, security, and prosperity. This was a reason for continued and complete obedience. And since God in His dealings with them had displayed so much kindness and wisdom, faithfulness and power, He had surely proved Himself to be worthy of their unlimited and hearty confidence. He is unchangeable; therefore His past doings are examples of what we may expect Him to do in the future. History, properly studied, will be the nurse of faith and hope (comp. Psa. lxxviii. 3-8). (e)

III. A monitor against sin.

Very impressively the history reveals—

1. *Man's proneness to sin.* The Israelites sinned at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 11, 12), in the wilderness of Sin (Exod. xvi. 2, 3), at Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 1-4), at Sinai (Exod. xxxii.), at Kibroth-hattaavah (chap. xi.), at Kadesh (chap. xiv.), &c. How sadly in human life to day is the history of Israel in this respect reproduced!

2. *God's antagonism against sin.* See this at Sinai, at Kibroth-hattaavah, at Kadesh, in the rebellion of Korah and his company (chap. xvi. 31-50), in the sin "in the matter of Peor" (chap. xxv. 1-9). God is the unrelenting foe of sin. (f)

3. *The great evil of sin.* This itinerary shows by intimation how it had cursed Israel. All their sorrows and afflictions had resulted from sin. Many of these stations would never have been visited but for their sins. More than thirty-seven years of their wanderings were caused by them. They had painfully proved that sin "is an evil thing and bitter" (comp. Jer. ii. 19). (g) All this was calculated to warn them against committing it. This use of history is distinctly mentioned in Psa. lxxviii. 9. And this, we think, was one of the ends why Moses was commanded to keep this diary of travel. Let the miseries which sin has caused us check every inclination to it. (h)

Conclusion.

Every man should remember his own history, and profit by his own experiences.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This point is illustrated on pp. 152-154, 164

(b) Illustrations on the *Divine provision* are given on pp. 154, 189, 190, 202.

(c) The *Divine protection* is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 101, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 407, 416, 417.

(f) and (g) For illustrations on these points see p. 327.

(h) An illustration on *Discouragements to sin* is given on p. 288.

MOSES'S DIARY OF TRAVELS, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 2.)

This chapter is a compilation from Moses's diary, recording the journeys on the way from Egypt to Canaan. The text tells us that God told Moses to keep this record, and to publish it. Human life is not to be forgotten; it is a thing of interest and moment to the person living it, and it is full of instruction to others observing it. God wished the people to remember these journeys; and He wishes all ages to know of them and to learn from them. Let us notice a few of the lessons God intends these journeys to teach us.

I. They impress upon us the great fact of God's continued presence and interest in human life.

As we read the incidents recorded of these journeys, we see God feeding, guiding, protecting the people. In the census taken at His command, we see that He knows every individual and keeps a record of every life. Then we see Him giving the people laws, sanitary and moral, tending to health and comfort, purity and holiness. These journeys show us that God knew all, was interested in all, and was the best Friend of all. He is still the same, &c.

II. They point out to us that God is the one safe and true Guide through life.

The people in the wilderness were ignorant of the way, exposed to many dangers, and quite helpless in themselves. These journeys show that God with them was more than equal to all emergencies. They prove that while they trusted God, they were never in want; while they followed Him, they never missed the way; and while they obeyed Him, they never suffered harm. To us, as to them, the journey of life is a perilous one: the way is unknown to us, and we need a guide. Let the record of these journeys commend to us Israel's Guide. He knows the way; He never errs; He can ever protect; He is one we can wholly trust; and He is willing to be our Guide.

III. They present to us a picture of human life, and thus tend to give us correct views of life.

What is life as seen from these records? A pilgrimage of varied and chequered experiences. In no place had they a "continuing city"; and in their mysterious wanderings to and fro, they met with all kinds of experiences. They were constantly finding fault with God; and yet He was leading them in a straight, the best way. Such is life to us all; and it is well for us to know it, so as to have right views of life. "Here have we no continuing city;" this is not our rest. God is often leading us in a way which is mysterious to us; His paths are to us often in the deep waters; and we are often perplexed. But let us look at these journeys. He is ever doing right—doing all things well. And the way He leads His people now, as then, is the best way to rest. As in these journeys so in our life; we have Marah and Elim, storm and calm, trouble and comfort; and let us not forget that God led the people to both. Let none then build their hopes on the earth; let none despair in passing through trials and afflictions. Our life here is a mingled one.

"Bits of gladness and of sorrow,
Strangely crossed and interlaid:

Days of fever and of fretting,
Hours of kind and blessed calm:

Tears of parting, smiles of meeting;
Paths of smooth and rugged life.

Such are our annals upon earth,
Our tale from very hour of birth,
The soul's true history.—*Bonar.*

IV. They show to us that the greatest evils of life and its only dangers come from sin.

Journeying through this world cannot be all pleasant. In the nature of things, trials and troubles must and do come; for we are in an enemy's land,

we are passing through a course of discipline, &c. But the greatest evils and the only dangers of life come from sin. Look at these journeys. Nothing really injures man but sin. God led the people to the Red Sea, to Marah, to the wilderness, &c.; it was often trying to them; but God never failed them; He was equal to all; they lost not a man; they wanted nothing while they were faithful to Him. Invariably we find that sin was their curse. So with us. There is nothing to *fear* in poverty, illness, death, &c. They are hard to bear; we need patience under them; but they cannot *hurt* us. Yea! God can turn them into blessings for us. But as for sin, it is ever a curse, and nothing but a curse; it ruins body and soul; injures us for time and eternity. Yet people love sin, &c.

O that all such would read the record of these journeys! &c.

V. They suggest the comforting thought that by trusting in God and following Him we are sure to possess the inheritance which He has promised to His people.

Difficulties, trials, opposition are met on the way to heaven; but following after God, we shall safely reach the "good land beyond Jordan," as did the people the record of whose journeys God commanded Moses to write.

We are all journeying through life; soon, soon the journey will end. Let each ask himself, Whither am I going? Who is my guide? What will the end be? And let these journeys of Israel urge us all to seek for Israel's God.—
David Lloyd.

THE DEPARTURE FROM THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.

(Verses 3, 4.)

Concerning the departure of Israel from Egypt, the text sets forth the following facts—

I. Their departure succeeded the observance of a significant and sacred memorial.

"They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow after the Passover." See pp. 139-141.

Learn: *The importance of commemorating the Divine mercies to us.* Such commemorations tend to foster our gratitude to God, to encourage our confidence in Him, &c. (a)

II. Their departure was public and triumphant.

"The children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

1. *It was public.* "In the sight of all the Egyptians." There was nothing clandestine or ignominious in the way in which they left the land of their oppressors (comp. Isa. lii. 12).

2. *It was triumphant.* "With an high hand." God had displayed a

little of the awful might of His strong right hand to the Egyptians. He effected the deliverance of Israel, &c.

Learn: *The certainty of the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, and the fulfilment of the Divine promises.* Notwithstanding the most powerful and persistent opposition, He carries forward His plans to triumphant issues. A reason for trusting Him, &c. (b)

III. Their departure took place when their oppressors were engaged in the most mournful occupation.

"For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them." How deep and keen must have been the anguish of the Egyptians! The sorrow of "one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," is spoken of in the sacred Scriptures as the most sharp and sore. And how universal was this sorrow! "There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

Learn: *The greatest sorrows are the result of our sins.* The anguish of the Egyptians arose from their oppression

and cruelty to the Israelites, and their persistent refusal to comply with the demand of God, and let them go. Shun sin, &c. (c)

IV. Their departure had been brought about by the most awful displays of the Divine judgments.

"All their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments."

1. *On the Egyptians.* "The whole kingdom of Egypt," says Dean Milman, "had been laid waste by successive calamities: the cruelty of the oppressors had been dreadfully avenged; all classes had suffered in the indiscriminating desolation. Their pride had been humbled; their most sacred prejudices wounded; the Nile had been contaminated; their dwellings polluted by loathsome reptiles; their cleanly persons defiled by vermin; their pure air had swarmed with troublesome insects; their cattle had perished by a dreadful malady; their bodies broken out with a filthy disease; their early harvests had been destroyed by the hail, the later by the locusts; an awful darkness had enveloped them for three days;" and, finally, they were smitten with a calamity more dreadful than all these, the instant death of all their firstborn, both of man and cattle.

2. *On their idols.* "Upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments." The meaning of this clause is very doubtful. From the fact that the words are here connected with the burying of

the firstborn, "it has been supposed," says Dean Alford, "that the destruction of the firstborn is meant by the phrase, seeing that among them would be many animals worshipped by the Egyptians. Calvin supposes that the judgment would consist in the demonstration of the worthlessness of the help and guardianship of Egypt's gods. But it must be confessed that both these explanations fall short of any satisfactory elucidation of the words. The Pseudo Jonathan gives a perhaps more likely interpretation, when he refers it to a destruction of the images of Egypt's gods: 'The molten images shall liquefy, those of stone shall be smitten in pieces, those of earth be broken up, those of wood shall be burnt to ashes' (comp. 1 Sam. v. 3, f.). We have very similar denunciations in Isa. xix. 1; Jer. xliii. 13; x'vi. 25; Ezek. xxx. 13, in three of which places is a distinct reference to the destruction of the *images*. But if this is meant, there is, of course, far more beneath it: the gods of Egypt are demoniac powers, and Jehovah's discomfiture of them, beginning with the failure of the magicians, was consummated" in the destruction of the firstborn.

Learn: *The utter folly of any creature opposing himself to God.* "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 460.

(c) Illustrations on this point are given on pp. 97, 258, 327.

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 252, 312.

SUCCOTH AND ETHAM: THE DETERMINATION OF THE ROUTE.

(Verses 5 and 6.)

"Succoth, their first station, seems to have been the general rendezvous after their hasty flight, and from thence

their journey proper began." Here various Divine instructions seem to have been given to the Israelites, the

consideration of which is beyond the scope of our work. There is, however, one question connected with the encampment at Succoth, which cannot be overlooked in any satisfactory treatment of this itinerary, viz., the determination of the route to be pursued; for it is in the account of their brief stay here that we first read of that route. From Succoth to Palestine, through the land of the Philistines, the usual caravan way, is comparatively a short journey. "From Rameses to Gaza," says Kalisch, "is a straight and much frequented way of eight or ten days, either northwards, through the pass of Djebel-el-Tih, or more eastwards, through that of Djebel-el-Edshmeb; and the sons of Jacob journeyed, in not many days, from Palestine to Egypt to buy corn." Why then were the Israelites led by the long and trying "way of the wilderness of the Red Sea"? The answer is given in Exod. xiii. 17.

The following homiletic sketch on the determination upon this route as illustrating *The tender consideration of God for His people* is taken from *Buddicom's Christian Exodus*.

The Christian life is a growth, and if assailed by some temptations in its infancy, the consequences might be fatal. He, therefore, who commences and maintains the process of our salvation, gradually accustoms His soldiers and servants to the difficulties of their warfare. Their faith, love, zeal, and self-denial are thus *exercised* rather than *oppressed*.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites.

They had been redeemed from bondage. They were commencing their journey to the Promised Land, every spirit filled with pleasure. They were confident of their power to endure the trials of the way. The heart-searching God knew their deficiencies; and a variety of circumstances connected with their feeble faith determined Him in wisdom to divert their feet towards Canaan by a devious path.

1. *The Philistines, who lay between them and the promised inheritance, were*

a brave and warlike people, against whom the sons of Jacob, numerous as they were, could not hope to succeed in battle. Wisely, therefore, did the Lord judge that they would shrink from such enemies. Such are the Christian's foes. Satan has triumphed over man in every age. And thinkest thou, Christian, that the enemies of the soul are enfeebled? What, then, would be the consequences if God led thee past them to Canaan? Wisely and graciously are you led by the wilderness.

2. *The Israelites were unarmed, and therefore utterly unable to cope with the Philistines, who were prepared with every means of offence and defence which a people whose delight was in war could invent.* The young believer just escaped from the house of bondage is defenceless. His enemies are armed. He cannot expect to wield the sword of the Spirit with the full energy of one who has been accustomed to fight with it.

3. *In thus estimating the goodness of God towards the children of Israel, we must add that their spirits were bowed down by long captivity.* The hard bondage in mortar and brick was not the school in which to learn courage. Hence Israel was not fitted to match against the free soldiers of Philistia. The slavery of Satan unfits for conflict with the foes of the soul.

II. The dealing of God towards them.

God might have made Israel at peace with the Philistines; or have given them courage to defeat their foes. But this would have comprehended less of moral discipline.

1. *He avoided the nearest way to the Promised Land, and led them by the way of the wilderness.* The Israelites would be astonished at the line of march; they would be disposed to murmur. Has not God often contradicted your desires? The passenger ignorant of navigation cannot direct the course of the ship. The ship-master knows the rocks: God knows our path best.

2. *He saw fit that they should pass*

through the dangers of the Red Sea, and sojourn in the wilderness of Sin. Could this be the result of wisdom? "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." It is the exclusive province of unerring wisdom to draw an exact line between the discipline necessary for our moral good, and that severity of affliction which might overwhelm us. We

must confide in our Heavenly Father.

3. *Although the journey of the Israelites was contrary to their expectations, their wishes, and their clouded judgment, it was the safest and the best path to Canaan.* "He led them forth by the right way." Let us learn, then, to leave the choice of our course simply and solely to God.

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, STANDING STILL IN THE MIDST OF DANGER.

(Verse 7.)

Departing from Etham, "on a sudden," to quote the words of Dean Milman, "the march of the Israelites is altered; instead of pressing rapidly onwards, keeping the sea on their right hand, and so heading the gulf, they strike to the south, with the sea on their left, and deliberately encamp at no great distance from the shore, at a place called Pi-hahiroth. The king, recovered from his panic, and receiving intelligence that the Israelites had no thought of return, determined on pursuit: intelligence of this false movement, or at least of this unnecessary delay on the part of the Israelites, encouraged his hopes of vengeance. The great caste of the warriors, the second in dignity, were regularly quartered in certain cities on the different frontiers of the kingdom, so that a considerable force could be mustered on any emergency. With great rapidity he drew together 600 war chariots, and a multitude of others, with their full equipment of officers. In the utmost dismay the Israelites beheld the plain behind them glittering with the hostile array; before them lay the sea; on the right, impracticable passes. Resistance does not seem to have entered their thoughts; they were utterly ignorant of military discipline, perhaps unarmed, and encumbered with their families, and their flocks and herds. 'Because there were no graves in Egypt,' they exclaimed, in the bitterness of their despair, 'hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?'

Their leader alone preserved his calmness and self-possession."

Let us fix upon some of his remarkable words to them as suggesting instructive and helpful considerations: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day" (Exod. xiv. 13). Consider—

I. The deplorable effect of slavery upon the Israelites.

This, the first peril which they encountered, revealed their almost utter destitution of manliness. Notice—

1. *Their cowardice.* Soon as they saw the advancing hosts of Pharaoh "they were sore afraid." They were in great consternation, prepared for anything mean and unmanly; totally unprepared for anything noble or brave.

2. *Their faithlessness.* All the signs and wonders of the Divine Hand wrought on their behalf are lost sight of by reason of their present difficulty and danger.

3. *Their ingratitude.* How disgracefully they reproached Moses! "Because there were no graves in Egypt," &c. What a base return for all his disinterested and noble efforts on their behalf! They go so far as to *apostatise* in spirit. "Better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." A man would have said: "Better death than slavery; better anything than to again bow our neck beneath the yoke of the oppressor. When freedom and honour are no more,

life is not desirable." But slavery had crushed the manhood out of them. The degradation of their position had done its mischievous work by degrading themselves, and reducing them in spirit to mere serfs. In estimating their conduct, we must thus take into account their previous disadvantages and sufferings. And this principle should be observed in analogous cases in our own day. Apply it in the case of the *reclaimed drunkard*. It is unreasonable to complain because he is not at once a man of refinement, &c. It will take years to repair the waste and injury of the years of intemperance. Let us be thankful for the transformation of the drunkard into a sober man, and wait with patience for the exhibition of the characteristics of a noble manhood. Apply it to the *spiritual life*. After we are delivered from the bondage of sin, we shall often discover evil results of our former life clinging to us, and retarding our progress. The strength and courage of mature Christian manhood are not attained at once. Sainthood is a growth. Let us patiently and hopefully persevere, &c.

II. The distinguished heroism of Moses.

Amid all the excitement, danger, alarm, and reproaches of the people, Moses was sublimely calm and magnanimous. He uttered no reproach to his craven-hearted followers; but addressed to them words of lofty inspiration and encouragement. "Fear ye not, stand still," &c. The crisis that revealed the mean cowardice and base ingratitude of his followers, revealed also the noble generosity and triumphant heroism of the leader. That which brought out their want of faith in God, also brought out the strength and firmness of his faith in Him.

III. The remarkable exhortation of Moses.

"Fear ye not, stand still," &c. This exhortation warrants the inference, that *there are times when our highest wisdom is to "stand still" and wait the Divine directions; when the best thing we can do is to do nothing but look to God to indi-*

cate our course. We do not counsel indolence either in temporal or spiritual things. There can be no progress without effort; or attainment without industry; or conquest without conflict. Yet there are seasons in life when it is the part of the wise man and the Christian not to exhaust himself in fruitless efforts, but to "stand still" and wait with all possible calmness for the interposition of God. When we have done all that we can do, and can do no more, and yet the end is not attained, we are not extricated from our difficulties, it is wise in us not to exhaust ourselves in frantic cries and efforts which merely beat the air, but to wait until God shall appear for our help. (a) This principle is applicable to—

1. *Our personal salvation.* We are commanded to "work out our own salvation;" and only by patient and earnest effort can we advance in the Christian life. But there is a very important part of our salvation in which we can do nothing but "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Thus it is in relation to our acceptance with God. Our part in this is not to endeavour to commend ourselves to His favour, or strive to justify ourselves before Him, or labour to merit His grace. Our part is to accept His grace, to leave ourselves to His mercy, to receive Christ as our Saviour, to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

2. *The exigencies of life.* There are seasons when we find human and earthly resources utterly inadequate to our need. There are burdens which no human friend can help us to bear; difficulties from which no human skill can extricate us; crises in which we are thrown either into unmanly, enforced submission, or into the frenzies of despair, or upon the help of God. In these crises let us "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;" let us hopefully appeal to Heaven for help. Thus did David (Psa. lx. 11; cxlii. 4, 5). We are exhorted in the Scriptures to do so (Psa. xlvii. 10; Isa. xxx. 7, 15). (b) Nor is it *less brave*, at such times,

to "stand still" and wait the help of God. The coward may struggle frantically in the terrible crises of life; but only the heroic can wait the time when action is serviceable, and wait that time calmly. To stand still in the moment of supreme anxiety, and wisely estimate our resources and scan our prospects, and determine the best mode and time for action, and cast ourselves upon

God—this demands a brave man, and one whose courage springs from faith. There are times when it is more heroic to "stand still" than to fight, and crises when it is wiser to wait than to work. (c)

The great lesson of our subject is this, *trust in God*. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) One of our hardest lessons is to find out the wisdom of our hindrances; how we are to be put forward and upward by being put back and put down; encouraged by being rebuked; prospered by being baffled. When the company in the "Pilgrim's Progress" had to sit up watching all night at the house of Gaius, Greatheart kept them awake with this riddle, "He that would kill must first be overcome"; and the truth in it has been practically dug out, by trials that broke sleep, through many a hard fortune, in every Christian experience since. It needs wakeful watchers, spiritual eyesight, to read that riddle of life, how defeat helps progress; how a compulsory standing still speeds us on; how humiliation exalts; how putting a cross on the shoulders lightens the burden of the race. But Christ has solved the wonder of His own cross, humbling Himself, becoming obedient unto death, and in His humiliation having His judgment taken away.

Gradually, to believing eyes, the fact comes out. Standing still at the right time, in the right way, for the right purpose, is the surest advance. Waiting on God brings us to our journey's end faster than our feet. The failure of our favourite plans is often the richest success of the soul. Let the pressure of trouble drive you down from your heights of health and pride, and you will come upon the primary foundation, and grow strong out of the rock. Be exiled from the convivial fellowships of comfort and popularity, and you make new acquaintances with stronger friends,—Christian self-possession, and wholesome repentance, and a mastery of your moral forces, and faith in your Lord.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) In the midst of our own houses, there are more secret sorrows than I need to name. Every life has its own. Perhaps there are erring, ungrateful, and ungracious children, with parents' hearts breaking and bleeding over them, and agonizing in daily prayers for their return. "Have faith in God"; every prayer pierces the Heaven of heavens; the Intercessor and Mediator pleads with it; and its answer is committed to some strong angels

at the right hand of the Throne. There are anxieties, alienations, unavailing affections, crossed desires and hopes. There are memories running back from pews in this house of prayer to the graves of those that worship no more in earthly temples. Rest, mourners, in the Lord. Seek not the living among the dead. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all else shall be added. "Let us be still beneath God's hand; for though His hand be heavy upon us, it is strong and safe beneath us too; and none can pluck us out of His hand." O, impatient griefs, and sorrows that have no hope, be still; and ye hopes that would outrun the wisdom of a healing Providence and a saving Mercy, be still; all unreasonable and rebellious thoughts, be still; know that the Lord, He is God. Remember that "the darkness is God's as well as the light"; and "if we cannot walk" and work therein, "we can" at least kneel down and "pray."—*Ibid.*

(c) If we learn to measure the bravery of Christian acquirements rather by the inward effort they cost than by their display, if we estimate character more by the standard of Christ's beatitudes than by what we short-sightedly call "results," we shall find some of the sublimest fruits of faith among what are commonly called passive virtues: in the silent endurance that hides under the shadow of great afflictions; in the quiet loveliness of that forbearance which "suffereth long and is kind"; in the charity which is "not easily provoked"; in the forgiveness which can be buffeted for doing well and "take it patiently"; in the smile on the face of diseased and suffering persons, a transfiguration of the tortured features of pain brightening sick rooms more than the sun; in the unostentatious heroism of the household, amidst the daily dripping of small cares; in the noiseless conquests of a love too reverent to complain; in resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for Him. Have you yourself never known the time when you found it a harder lesson to learn how to be still in your room than to be busy in the world? Of masculine natures that is apt to be the special cross. And so that may

be the point where faith and virtue need to rally their strength, if you would be a triumphant disciple. It is a fact which not all of us may have noticed, that of the nine beatitudes of our Lord, all, unless it be one, pronounce their blessing on what the world would

call tame and passive traits, from "the poor in spirit," to those who are reviled and persecuted without revenge. So does Christianity turn upside down the vulgar vanity of our ambition, and empty our worldliness of blessedness,—*Ibid.*

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, A LONG SEPARATION.

(Verse 7.)

There are other remarkable words of Moses, spoken at this station, which we shall do well to consider before we pass on. Having uttered the words which we have already noticed, he said: "For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exod. xiv. 13). In these words we have an illustration of—

I. The triumphant faith of Moses.

It rose superior to difficulties and dangers; the abject terror of his followers could not diminish its vitality or vigour; the almost desperate aspect of affairs could not overcome it; it was splendidly victorious over all. Let us emulate Moses in this respect.

II. The suicidal hardihood of the wicked.

Most terrible was the development of Pharaoh's character. His resistance of the Divine commands although they were authenticated by the most striking and dreadful signs; and his hardening of himself in rebellion against God—how appalling are these! Madly he rushed into ruin; blindly he courted destruction. His is a typical case. Sin seems to infatuate men—drives them mad. Spiritually, men are their own executioners; they of their own accord rush into the sea that engulfs them. Sin is madness. The persistent sinner is beside himself.

III. The working of God in history.

1. *Delivering the oppressed.* The Israelites had long cried unto Him; and the only result seemed to be that their position became worse. As we reckon time, His interposition was long delayed. Does God hear? Does He judge amongst men? Yes. "He

sitteth in the throne judging right."

"He will avenge His own elect," &c.

2. *Retributing the oppressor.* Long time had God borne with Pharaoh; but at length His forbearance ceases and He visits him in judgment. "Because sentence against an evil work," &c. (Eccles. viii. 11). "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21). "Thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii. 3-6). "He that being often reprov'd," &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

3. *Developing in all His own wonderful purposes.* Consider these Israelites,—they were cowardly, ungrateful, preferring to return into slavery than to die fighting for freedom. How unlikely that they should ever become a truly great nation! How unlikely that through them should come to the human race the greatest blessings! the clear revelation of the will and purpose of God, and the Redeemer of men! How unlikely! Yet such was God's purpose; towards its accomplishment these events were tending; and in due season it was realized. History should be studied reverently, for God is working in it. In all and by all He is developing His own glorious plans.

IV. Separations which are taking place amongst men in the present.

1. *There are many persons whom having seen them once we "shall see them again no more for ever."* In the thronged thoroughfare, in the railway carriage, at the summer retreat, we see many persons once, and never more in this life. Join to this the fact that we may influence them by act, or word, or look; and how solemn is the con-

sideration! What an argument for a true life at all times!

2. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same circumstances.* We meet them again; but, so changeable are all things here that, the surroundings of their life are altered. The poor have become prosperous; the prosperous, impoverished; the distressed have become happy, and the happy, miserable, &c. This changeableness makes many a separation very anxious. We ask,—“Shall we meet again as well and as happy?” &c.

3. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same character.* We part from a person who is ungodly and

profane; years roll away, and we meet him a reverent and religious man. A youth leaves home reckless and wild; he returns a thoughtful and earnest man. A young man or woman leaves home comparatively innocent and pure; but the man returns with a blasted character, and the woman a moral wreck. This is the most separating separation. Separation of time, or space, or even of world, does not so painfully separate as division of character.

V. The great separation which will take place amongst men in the future.

See Matt. xiii. 30, 39-43; xxv. 31-46.

In that great final separation, where shall we be found?

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, GOING FORWARD IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES.

(Verse 7.)

The time for standing still and waiting was soon at an end. Moses sought direction from God; and at once received the Divine answer: “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. xiv. 15).

It must have seemed strange to the Israelites to be commanded to advance. To “go forward” seemed like rushing from one difficulty into another. Pharaoh and his army were an alarming danger behind them; before them the sea appeared a danger no less to be dreaded. Yet the order was, “Go forward.” Notwithstanding the threatening sea, they were to advance. We regard this as an illustration of *Christian Progress in the Face of Difficulties*. It is an established fact of the Christian life, that God calls us to advancement though there are immense difficulties in our path. He commands us to “Go forward” in despite of dangers which appear inevitable and fatal.

I. In the Christian life advancement is demanded.

Progress is a great law of the universe. In nature all things move onward. Winds, and streams, and stars,

are ever advancing. The history of science, philosophy, and art, is a record of progress. The Religion of Jesus Christ also has advanced and grown constantly. Progress is a law of all life. Where progress ends decay begins. So in the spiritual life the command is, forward, upward, heavenward, Godward. Continuance in the same condition is impossible. Advancement to higher attainments, and nobler developments, and more perfect conditions of being, is ever demanded of us. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” “Grow in grace,” &c. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,” &c. (2 Peter i. 5-7). “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” “Go forward.” (a)

II. In the Christian life advancement is demanded with a full recognition of the obstacles in the way of it.

He who commanded the Israelites to “go forward” was perfectly acquainted with the sea which rolled forbiddingly before them, and all the succeeding

difficulties which awaited them; yet He gave the order to advance. He does likewise in the Christian life. He hath forewarned us "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Yet He ever summons us to advance, ever calls us to ascend. The path of Christian progress is seldom an easy one. Dangers and difficulties are numerous. We pass from conquest to renew the conflict. We throw one foe and advance to engage another. We surmount one difficulty, and another challenges us to effort. Yet knowing all these things, the Lord says, "Go forward." (b)

III. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, may be surmounted.

In ordinary life we frequently witness proofs of this principle. Man, by the force of a sound and active understanding, and iron will, and persistent effort, is constantly removing mountains, accomplishing that which is pronounced impossible.

"Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star,"

he can do wonders—almost "all things are possible to him." Let the same mind and will and activity be under the guidance of God, and nerved by faith in Him, and difficulties shall melt away before them. "All things are possible to him that believeth." "Faith laughs at impossibilities." The Israelites moved forward at the command of God; and before the majesty of such reliant obedience, the sea parted. The difficulty vanished in the presence of believing obedience. When God saith, "Go forward," though it be towards the deep sea or trackless mountain, let us advance, and some unseen path will open before us, or the waters will divide at our feet.

"Dark and wide the sea appears,
Every soul is full of fears,
Yet the word is onward still.
Onward move and do His will;
And the great deep shall discover
God's highway to take thee over." (c)

IV. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, contribute to our advancement.

Obstacles are disciplinary. Every difficulty that has vanished before the obedience of faith is an argument for future and greater reliance. Every conflict, courageously entered upon and continued, must end in conquest; and every conquest fits us for more severe conflicts, and makes our final victory more sure. Through the grace of God, difficulties, dangers, and foes, are all contributing to our progress. (d)

V. In the Christian life we are incited to progress, notwithstanding obstacles, by a host of encouragements.

Here are some of our encouragements.

1. *Believing prayer is mighty with God.* Moses cried unto the Lord; and the Lord responded to his prayer by dividing the sea. He still attends to the requests of men. (e)

2. *Glorious examples incite us onward.* Think of Paul: "I count not myself to have apprehended," &c. And later in life: "I have fought a good fight," &c. Think of that glorious and ever-increasing multitude who by faith have triumphed over all hindrances, perils, and adversaries. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience," &c. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about," &c.

3. *The character of our great Leader encourages us forward.* His path has been one of splendid victories; His career one of constantly increasing glory. He is equal to every emergency. With Jesus at our head we need not fear to advance.

What earnest voices unite in urging us to "Go forward"! Voices of the glorified urge us onward. They who have passed from the semblances of time to the realities of eternity call upon us to advance. The rest that awaits us invites us forward. We do not pine for our rest before God wills it. We long for no inglorious rest. We are thankful rather for the invaluable training of difficulty, the loving discipline of danger and strife. Yet in the midst

of it all, the prospect of rest attracts us heavenward. Through all, and above all, God cries, "Go forward;" "Come up hither."

"Forward! be our watchword,
Steps and voices joined;
Seek the things before us,
Not a look behind:

Burns the fiery pillar
At our army's head;
Who shall dream of shrinking,
By our Captain led?
Forward through the desert,
Through the toil and fight:
Canaan lies before us,
Zion beams with light."—*Alford*.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Certainly advance is the great law of the Christian life, as well as of the universe. All things in nature and history go forward. The stream moves forward, not a wave of it turns back, its every eddy even is, in reality, advancing. The winds move forward, pausing, indeed, often on their journey, lingering amidst the locks of the pine or in the cleft of the rock, but speedily resuming their onward sweep again. The stars—the earth included—move forward, "hasting not, resting not," seeking, it is said, some distant centre. How we saw the comet of 1858 shooting like an arrow towards its broad target, the sun! Science, art, philosophy, literature, every species of knowledge, move forward; invention following invention—discovery, discovery; one man of genius eclipsing another, to be in his turn outshone. Time moves forward—oh, how rapidly! and how his vast wings seem to say as they rush along, "I have an engagement at the judgment-seat. I have an appointment in eternity, and I must fulfil it. My 'King's business requireth haste.'" Christ Himself never rested. He was never in a hurry, but He was always in haste. The difference between Him and many of His people is, His life was short, and He knew it, and did the most in it; theirs, too, is short, but they know it not, and do not with their might what their hand findeth to do. God Himself even, with all the leisure of eternity, is not losing an hour, but is carrying on His broad plans with undeviating regularity and increasing swiftness, and surely men should aspire in this respect to be imitators of, and fellow-workers with, God. Christ's religion, too, has been active and progressive; sometimes frozen up for a time like a river, but, like a river, working under the ice, and when spring arrived, making up for the time lost by the increased rapidity of its course. And so with the path of the individual; like the river, the winds, the stars, the Eternal Himself, it must advance. Our motto

should be "Excelsior."—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) The progress of the Christian is often from one difficulty to another, and very idle for him, in this earth, to expect an unvaried course of even moderate peace and happiness. He only exchanges one difficulty for another. After old obstacles are surmounted, new ones are sure to arise. The children of Israel probably thought they had buried all their difficulties in that ocean. And how loud and bold rung their psalm, as if it were a challenge to the wilderness, on the verge of which they stood. But the wilderness accepted the challenge, and what with thirst, hunger, wild beasts, and, at last, Divinely-appointed death, it engulfed almost all that multitude which had shouted for victory on the shore of the Red Sea. And so with the desert of this world. The Slough of Despond is exchanged for the Hill Difficulty, and that for the Castle of Giant Despair. We disguise not the pleasures of the wilderness, its wells, arbours, angels, Delectable Mountains, but notwithstanding all this, it is a wilderness at the best, and grows often more dreary the longer we pursue our path.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 393 (a).

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 393, 394.

(e) Beloved, if you can conceive of an age that is worse than another, so much the more is it a fit platform for the heavenly energy; the more difficulty, the more room for omnipotence to show itself; there is elbow-room for the great God when there is some great thing in the way, and some great difficulty that He may overturn. When there is a mountain to be cast into the valley, then there is almighty work to be done; and our covenant God only needs to see work to do for His praying people, and He will shortly do it.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

Illustrations on the *Power of Prayer* appear on pp. 183, 225.

THE DIVIDING OF THE RED SEA.

(Verse 8.)

"And they departed from before Pi-bahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness."

I. This dividing of the sea was miraculous.

1. *Because it took place, and the*

waters closed again, upon the outstretching of the hand of Moses, and in fulfilment of his word (Exod. xiv. 13). The sea is less manageable by man, perhaps, than any other force of nature. "The sea is God's, and He made it" (Psa. xcv. 5), and to Him only will it render obedience. The obedience in this case to Moses was, therefore, the result of a supernatural interposition. (a)

2. *Because the waters stood upright on either side of the path.* When waves roll back and leave their bed dry for a short space of time, they break, and return again; a strong wind would drive back the water on one side only and leave the water perhaps knee-deep or ankle-deep, but the wall of water on either side, and the dry land in the middle, could have been produced by miraculous power alone.

II. The fact of the miracle is proved by the present existence of the nation which was that day born.

No nation in the world, except the Hebrew, can point to the place and the day on which it began its national existence. All other ancient nations have lost their identity, but the Jews retain theirs, and the miracle of the Red Sea has always been the foundation fact of their history (Isa. lxiii. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 12, &c.).

Lessons.

i. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than physical convenience.* The Israelites could have entered Canaan by a much nearer way than through the Red Sea, but that way was chosen for them to teach them many important truths in connection

with God. The shortest way to attain an end is not always the best way. A short way to a fortune may not be so conducive to the formation of a worthy character as one which it takes much longer to travel. This truth is taught in the temptation of our Saviour (Luke iv. 5-8). Satan proposed a short way to that universal dominion, which our Lord knew could only be safely and truly attained through Gethsemane and Calvary.

ii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the uninterrupted operation of the ordinary laws of nature.* This is not at all surprising. The laws of nature are God's servants, and it is only reasonable to expect that, when He can reveal His power and mercy better by suspending their action, and operating, as it were, upon the forces of the world, without their instrumentality, He should do so. When the special end is accomplished they return to their wonted service. They have kept the bed of the Red Sea covered ever since the day when the waters closed over Pharaoh and his hosts.

iii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the preservation of bodily life.* This is an acknowledged fact. The life of a rebel is considered of less importance than the upholding of the law that condemns him to death. The lives of many men are oftentimes considered of less importance than the establishment and upholding of freedom, and the downfall of that which degrades the higher life of the human race and prevents its development.—*W. Harris.*

ILLUSTRATION.

(a) On a sudden Moses advances towards the sea, extends his rod, and a violent wind from the east begins to blow. The waters recede on both sides, a way appears; at night-fall, probably about eight o'clock, the caravan begins to defile along this awful pass. The wind continued in the same quarter all the night; but immediately they had passed over, and while the Egyptians, madly plunging after them, were in the middle of the passage, the wind as suddenly fell, the waters rushed

back into their bed, the heavy chariot-wheels of the pursuers sank into the sand, broke and overthrew the chariots, and in this state of confusion the sea swept over the whole host, and overwhelmed the king and all the flower of the Egyptian army.

Such is the narrative in the book of Exodus, which writers of all ages have examined, and, according to the bias of their minds, have acknowledged or denied the miraculous agency, increased or diminished its extent.

At an early period, historians (particularly in Egypt), hostile to the Jews, asserted that Moses, well acquainted with the tides of the Red Sea, took advantage of the ebb, and passed over his army, while the incautious Egyptians, attempting to follow, were surprised by the flood, and perished. Yet, after every concession, it seems quite evident that, without one particular wind, the ebb tide, even in the narrowest part of the channel, could not be kept back long enough to allow a number of people to cross in safety. We have, then, the alternative of supposing, that a man of the consummate prudence and sagacity, and the local knowledge, attributed to Moses, altered, suspended, or at least did not hasten his march, and thus deliberately involved the people, whom he had rescued at so much pains and risk, in the danger of being overtaken by the enemy, led back as slaves, or massacred, on the chance that an unusually strong wind would blow at a particular hour, for a given time, so as to keep back the flood, then die away, and allow the tide to return at the precise instant when the Egyptians were in the middle of their passage. . . .

Wherever the passage was effected, the Mosaic account cannot, by any fair interpretation, be made consistent with the exclusion of preternatural agency. Not to urge the

literal meaning of the waters being a wall on the right hand and on the left, as if they had stood up sheer and abrupt, and then fallen back again,—the Israelites passed through the sea with deep water on both sides; and any ford between two bodies of water must have been passable only for a few people at one precise point of time. All comparisons, therefore, to marches like that of Alexander, cited by Josephus idly, and in his worst spirit of compromise, are entirely inapplicable. That bold general took the opportunity of the receding tide to conduct his army round a bluff headland in Pamphylia, called Climax, where, during high water, there was no beach between the cliffs and the sea. But what would this, or any other equally daring measures in the history of war, be to the generalship of Moses, who must thus have decoyed his enemy to pursue him to the banks of the sea, and so nicely calculated the time, that the lowest ebb should be exactly at the hour of his greatest danger, while the whole of the pursuing army should be so infatuated, and so ignorant of the tides, as to follow them without any apprehension of the returning flood? In this case Moses would appear as formidable a rival to the military fame of Alexander, as to the legislative wisdom of Solon or Lycurgus.—*H. H. Milman, D.D.*

MARAH; OR, ASPECTS OF THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

(Verse 8.)

“And they went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.”

Human life in this world is a journey, which begins at birth and ends at death. Certain aspects of this journey are brought before us by the journey of the Israelites from the Red Sea to Marah, and their life at Marah.

I. The privations of this journey.

“They went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham.” And we learn from Exod. xv. 22, that during those days they “found no water.” We have already briefly treated this topic on p. 366. (a)

II. The disappointments of our journey.

“And pitched in Marah.” “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” How intensely

painful must their disappointment have been! (b)

An illustration of some experiences in our own life. We have looked upon some thing or some position, and have felt and said to ourselves: “When I attain that I shall be satisfied and happy.” We have attained it, and found it unsatisfactory and bitter. Napoleon III., when an exile, deemed the throne to be all he needed to secure his happiness. He attained it; and in a few years he confessed: “In changing my destiny, I have but changed my joys and sorrows. Formerly I bore the afflictions of exile; now I have to sustain the cares of power.” One has looked at *wealth* as the one thing needful to his happiness; secured it; and been filled with bitter disappointment. Another has so judged concerning *leisure*, and attained it, with a similar result. Many have

thus estimated *married life and offspring*. Countless mothers, on the birth of their first son, have said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." But how often, like Cain, has he wrung that mother's heart with anguish! How often has a father's beloved turned out a second Absalom! We have looked upon many things as the pleasant fruit of our life; grasped them; and discovered a foul worm at the core. God disappoints us with the waters of Marah in order to lead us to Him who can make them sweet. When we over-estimate things and creatures, He has ordered that they shall disappoint us in order to lead us to Him who can fully meet our highest and vastest expectation.

III. The sins of our journey.

When the Israelites found that they could not drink the waters of Marah, they "murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Notice—

1. *Their unreasonableness and ingratitude towards Moses*. Why murmur against him? Was he responsible for the lack of drinkable water? Could he make the bitter water sweet? Their murmurings were childish. Moreover, he had been their benefactor. He had dared and sacrificed bravely for them. How ungrateful, then, was their conduct towards him!

2. *Their unbelief and ingratitude to God*. They had soon forgotten practically their deliverance from Egypt and their passage through the Red Sea. Three days ago they were singing the song of victory; to-day they are murmuring. Past interpositions of God on their behalf should have inspired present confidence in Him. Gratitude should have precluded murmuring. We also are prone to sin in like manner in our life-journey; to overlook past deliverances in present dangers; to fret and murmur at the inconveniences and trials of the way; to be unbelieving and ungrateful, &c. (c)

IV. The all-sufficient Resource of our journey.

In answer to the prayer of Moses God made the bitter waters sweet for

them (Exod. xv. 25). He is our Resource, and he is—

1. *All-sufficient*. He is equal to every emergency and every need. To Him there are no emergencies. He sees the whole of our journey, knows every step of the way, and has wisely and amply provided for every need. (d)

2. *Always willing to help*. We have not to overcome by our prayers any unwillingness on His part to bless us. We have but sincerely to seek His aid, and He will impart it to us. (e)

3. *Ever available*. We can approach Him at all times and in all places. The cry of supplication or the song of praise will always reach His ear and secure His regard.

Brothers, we are all journeying, and sometimes with weary and aching hearts. Life's changes sometimes clothe our life in shade, and weigh down our hearts with sadness. Its disappointments surprise and grieve our spirits. Our own sins often fill our hearts with shame and sorrow. But here is our unfailing Resource. Our Lord can take away the sin. He can sanctify changes and disappointments to our spiritual and eternal advantage. Let our trust be in Him. We are all journeying; but we may each find the end of our journey to be a secure and blessed home. In that home there shall be no more changes saddening our souls, no more disappointments distressing us, no more sins to harass and grieve the soul; but pure and peaceful life, &c.

"Tuneful is the sound

That dwells in whispering boughs;
Welcome the freshness round,
And the gale that fans our brows.
But rest more sweet and still,
Than ever nightfall gave,
Our yearning hearts shall fill,
In the world beyond the grave.

"There shall no tempests blow,
No scorching noon-tide heat,
There shall be no more snow,
No weary, wandering feet.
So we lift our trusting eyes
From the hills our fathers trod,
To the quiet of the skies,
To the Sabbath of our God."

—Hemans.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Three days they marched without finding any water. We do not, with some, suppose, that during all this time they were without water. This was impossible. They must have brought water in their leathern bottles with them from the last station. But this time having passed without an opportunity of replenishing their vessels, the supply was at length exhausted, and they began to suffer fearfully from thirst. Let us not think lightly of their distress. Thirst is a cruel thing; and it is known to be such even in a humid clime, where the sensation is rarely and lightly experienced, and is very easily removed. But amid the hot sandy waste, under a burning sky, without any means of relief, the suffering is horrible. There is nothing like it. If we reflect that this vast host of men, women, and children, with numerous herds of cattle, had to travel over the sandy waste mostly on foot, with the burning sun over their heads, we may be able to form some faint and inadequate idea of their condition. But if we endeavour to picture to ourselves the circumstances of their case, and the unmistakable signs of suffering and misery which it presented, we shall have a more distinct apprehension of their wretched condition. They plod moodily and heavily on, no man speaking to his fellow. Many cannot speak if they would. Their tongues are parched and rough, and cling to the roofs of their mouths; their lips are black and shrivelled; and their eyeballs are red with heat, and sometimes a dimness comes over them, which makes them stagger with faintness. There is not one in all that multitude who probably would not have given all he possessed in the world, who would not have parted with a limb or have given up his life for one cool draught of water. And this was suffered by a people who had been used to drink without stint of the finest water in the world.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) But lo! their misery, they think is past. In the distance they behold trees and bushes clad in refreshing green, and they know there must be water near. With glad looks

and quickened steps they push joyously on.

“For sure through that green meadow flows
The living stream! And lo! their famished
beast

Sees the restoring sight!

Hope gives his feeble limbs a sudden strength,
He hurries on.”—*Thalaba.*

What a rush to the water! what eagerness to gulp the refreshing flood! But whence that universal groan, and horror, and despair? The water is bitter—so bitter as to be loathsome even to their intense agony of thirst. Pity them; but judge them not too severely, if, in that awful moment of disappointed hope, with the waters of Marah before their faces, and the waters of the Nile before their thoughts, they did murmur, they did complain that they had been brought from unfailing waters to perish in that thirsty desolation. They should have trusted in God. They had been rescued from more imminent danger; and it was no arm of flesh, but the sacred pillar of cloud, which had indicated their way and brought them to that place. They should have prayed to their Divine Protector to supply their wants, as He was well able to do; and although there is much in the real misery they suffered to extenuate *this* offence, their forgetfulness and neglect were most blameworthy. Yet, in consideration of their sufferings, God Himself excused them in this more readily than man has done. It will be seen in the sacred record that He dealt tenderly with them. He did not, as on other occasions, when they sinned in like manner without the like excuse, reprove them; but when Moses cried to Him for help, He, in the tenderness of His great pity, at once healed the waters, and made them sweet and salutary.—*Ibid.*

(c) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 266, 267; on *Ingratitude*, pp. 247, 368; and on *Unbelief*, p. 252.

(d) An illustration on this point appears on p. 369 (d)

(e) This point also is illustrated on p. 369 (e)

THE HEALING OF THE WATERS OF MARAH.

(Verse 8.)

“And they pitched in Marah.”

I. There are four bitter things of which Marah's waters are a likeness.

1. The bitterness of man's *heart*. The heart is by nature a bitter fountain sending forth its bitter waters.

2. The bitterness of man's *afflictions*. Affliction was intended to be a bitter

thing to flesh and blood, for it was part of that punishment which sin brought with it.

3. The bitterness of *God's wrath* which we have incurred. The displeasure of Him whose favour is life, from whom alone all good cometh.

4. The bitterness of the *death* that

we must die. This is as the waters of Marah to an ungodly man: "the sting of death is sin."

II. Let us see what answers to the tree, which, being cast into the waters, made them sweet.

The Gospel is able to sweeten all the bitters.

1. *The wrath of God.* Jesus cast Himself into those bitter waters and made them sweet. It was the very God who made the waters bitter, who

pointed out the means of healing them. It was the very God "to whom vengeance belongeth" who hath sent His Son into the world to save us from it.

2. *Afflictions.* It furnishes a motive for patience and an example to encourage.

3. *The heart of man.* The fountain of the heart is cleansed by grace.

4. *Death.* To him who cordially believes in Jesus, the sting of death is drawn by sin being covered.—*Arthur Roberts.*

ELIM: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

(Verse 9.)

Wells of the highest importance in Eastern countries. Heat, &c. Here, then, where there were twelve wells, and seventy palm trees, they encamped. Make some observations.

I. In the journey of human life the Lord affords us many kind accommodations.

These mercies are—

1. *Necessary.* What more so than water? So are His favours.

2. *Refreshing.* "Palm trees." Journey wearisome. Their shade delightful, &c. (a)

3. *Various.* Fountains and palm trees. God gives blessings not of some one kind only, but several. Their variety heightens them.

4. *Plentiful.* Twelve fountains and threescore and ten palm trees. They are plentiful if we compare them (1) with the enjoyments of others; (2) with our deserts.

II. Refreshing mercies after seasons of distress are peculiarly sweet.

Many seasons of afflictions, trials of mind, family, &c. Then these mercies sweet—why so?

1. *We have a higher relish for them.* So, spring after winter, health after sickness, &c.

2. *They give a proof that God has not forgotten us.* Apt to think so when He tries us, and we do not receive any peculiar marks of His favour. Then He returns, &c.

3. *They will increase our faith in future trials.* We shall expect in them fresh displays of power and goodness,—this will cause us to love Him more—serve Him better.

III. The blessings with which we are favoured should be used and enjoyed.

They encamped, not only drank, but, &c. All our mercies should be enjoyed.

1. *With humility.* We do not deserve any of them. Are entirely dependent on God for them. God designs by such dependence to keep us humble and obedient.

2. *With gratitude.* Ingratitude hateful to God and man. Gratitude pleasing, and ought naturally to flow to God, &c. Our mercies are great, and call loudly for it.

3. *With a firm resolution to devote the strength derived from them to God, &c.* Thus they will answer the end, &c. Then may we expect more. Devote yourselves therefore to His glory, &c.

IV. Amidst all our enjoyments we should not lose sight of our pilgrimage state.

They encamped, did not build a city, &c. Christians are travellers. World not our rest. We should—

1. *Cherish the idea that all earthly things are fading, withering.* Dew, flowers, &c. So human life. We know it; we should act accordingly. (b)

2. *Prepare for changes.* Changes of

condition, circumstances, feelings,—these are to be expected—will come. This generally acknowledged, and yet how few prepared.

3. *Wish to go forward.* Arguments for it deduced from what is said above. Heaven is at the end,—how worthy of

all our toil,—how refreshing, &c., will it be! (c)

Address,—1. *Such as are now on the march.*

2. *Such as are now encamped at Elin.*

Remarks arising from the subject.—*Thos. Spencer.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In eastern countries, where the habit of hospitality is stronger than with us, the traveller is sometimes surprised and regaled by much needed but unexpected wayside comforts. Yonder husbandman, who is now afield at his work, was here in the early morning to leave by the wayside that pitcher of water that the passing traveller might drink. This clump of trees, which makes a thick and welcome "shadow from the heat," was planted by one who expected neither fame nor money for his toil, and who now lies in a nameless grave. Hands now mouldering in dust scooped out this cool seat in the rock. Some "Father Jacob gave us this well, after drinking thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle." Travellers from the west are much affected by such instances of pure humanity and unselfish kindness. And yet these are but feeble types, mere dim shadows of Divine thoughtfulness and care. The heavenly Benefactor comes down in preventing loving kindness upon the pathway of His people. He foreknows, forecasts, foreruns. We think of Jesus as forerunner of His people only "within the veil." In a sense not less true, He is their forerunner along the journey of every day. We cannot be up so early that He has not been waking before us. We cannot run so

fast that He has not far outstripped our speed. Our to-morrow is His yesterday. He is with us and yet before us. He has said at one place and another,—“They are to pass this way; I will leave these helps for them; I will smooth down the over-ruggedness of life, so that they shall get through; I will open rivers for them in high places, and streams in the midst of the desert; and for the ever-recurring weariness of life, for its toil and conflict, heat and trouble, they shall have ‘quiet resting places.’”—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(b) The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening a cloud, by the reflection of the sun, invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colours, that in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it; but in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaunting appearance nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here.—*Bates.*

(c) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 163 (b), 409 (g).

IN THE WILDERNESS OF SIN.

(Verses 10-13.)

All the places mentioned in these verses were probably situated in the desert of Sin (see *Explanatory Notes in loco*). The principal events in this portion of the journey were the murmuring of the people, and the giving of the manna; and these have been treated in *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*

xvi. Moreover, in our own work we have noticed the base murmuring of the people on other occasions (see pp. 181, 183, 244, 245, 247, 265-267); we have also written on the manna (see pp. 187-190; and *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*, pp. 308, 309). For these reasons we proceed to the next verse.

REPHIDIM; OR, WATER FROM "THE ROCK IN HOREB."

(Verse 14.)

The history of Israel at Rephidim is remarkable by reason of (1) the want

of water, and its miraculous supply; and (2) the battle against Amalek

(Exod. xvii.). A similar want and supply of water we have already noticed (see pp. 366-371); and, having noticed these miracles also in our exposition of *Psa. lxxviii. 15, 16* (see *The Hom. Comm. on Psalms*, vol. i. pp. 443-446); we will introduce here a sketch from *Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament*.

Notice.

I. That the place of the miracle was calculated to increase the faith of the man who was to be the instrument in performing it—"the rock in Horeb."

God appeared first to Moses in Horeb (Exod. iii. 1). The return to places which God has fixed indelibly upon our minds by some special manifestation of His providential favour, is very helpful to every man's faith. It was so to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 10) when God said to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 1). He intended to use the place as a means of arousing him to increased faith and obedience by the remembrance of former mercies received there. So in the case of Moses. The return to Horeb would enable him to draw from the past some compensation for the trying circumstances of the present (Exod. xvii. 2-4). The very sight of the place in which God had given him promises (Exod. iii. 10-20), which had since been fulfilled, would give him hope for the future.

II. The temptation connected with the miracle.

The murmuring and chiding of Israel against Moses is said to be *tempting God*. The miracles already wrought by Moses had been an abundant confirmation of His Divine commission. God had in the past so

identified His servant with Himself, that to murmur against him was finding fault with his and their God.

III. The nature of the miracle.

1. *The water from the rock was a miracle, because it gushed forth at the moment when Moses smote the rock, as the Lord had said.* The people by their murmuring had fully admitted that no water could be obtained from natural sources. God never supplies our wants by supernatural means when they can be satisfied by the operation of the ordinary laws of nature.

2. *But though miraculous, it was connected with human agency.* Moses smote the rock, and God gave the water. The rod was in the hand of Moses, the power in the hand of God. Peter took the lame man by the hand, and God gave him the power to walk (Acts iii. 7).

Lesson.

God can bring good to His people from the most unlikely sources. Nothing seemed more unlikely to yield water than the barren rock of Horeb. So God often brings refreshing streams of comfort to His people out of hard circumstances. Paul and Silas could sing in the dungeon, and their imprisonment was made the means of adding to their converts in Philippi. The lot of John in Patmos seemed hard and dreary indeed; but, at the bidding of Christ, streams of living water gushed forth there, which refreshed the soul of the apostle at the time, and have followed the Church until the present. Out of the sufferings of the martyrs came joy to themselves and blessings to their descendants. Above all, out of the hard circumstances of the crucified Lord of glory, God has brought forth waters of everlasting life.

ILLUSTRATION.

At Rephidim they again wanted water, their murmurings were now more violent, and their conduct more outrageous than at Marah. We had then some sympathy for them, and were inclined to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf. But we have not a

word to say for them now. Their misbehaviour is most flagrant, and the harshest judgment cannot estimate their offence too severely. They had lately seen their wants relieved in a similar emergency; and at this very time they were receiving, every morning, from heaven

their daily bread. Yet so strangely unreasonable was their spirit, that they reproached Moses for having brought them out of Egypt, to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst; and their violence of manner was such as led Moses to cry unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." Alas! it had come to this already. Already—in one little month—were the ransomed people prepared to deal thus with their deliverer, all whose toil and

thought were spent for their advantage. Thus soon did they justify the prescient reluctance with which he had abandoned for these responsibilities the safe and quiet life he loved so well. It seems to have been in order that Moses might not be plunged in deeper discouragement, that the Lord forbore to declare His own displeasure. He simply indicated the mode in which He meant to provide for their wants.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

REPHIDIM; OR, THE BATTLE BETWEEN AMALEK AND ISRAEL.

(Verse 14.)

We cannot well pass away from Rephidim without noticing the remarkable battle which was fought there between the Amalekites and the Israelites, and which is recorded in Exod. xvii. 8-16. Before mentioning what appear to us as its chief teachings, let us attend to some important preliminary considerations.

i. *On the part of the Israelites this battle was entirely defensive* (Exod. xvii. 8; Deut. xxv. 17, 18). It was for the preservation of their own lives, and the lives of their people, that the Israelites fought, and Moses prayed on this day.

ii. *The part which the Israelites took in this battle was approved by Jehovah.* It was commanded by Moses, who, as the minister of Jehovah, was specially authorised and attested; and Jehovah manifested His approval by giving them the victory to a great extent in answer to prayer, and by commanding Moses to write an account of the battle in a book, and thus transmit it to coming generations. This battle was a righteous one on the part of Israel, or it would not thus have received the Divine approval.

iii. *What was the cause of this battle?* This was probably twofold:—(1) The fertility of the valley. We accept the conclusion that Rephidim was Wady Feiran, of which Dr. Hayman speaks as, "the well-known valley, richer in water and vegetation than any other in the peninsula. . . . It is the finest valley in the whole peninsula." And Dean Stanley: "Rephidim,

'the resting places,' is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the adjacent palm-grove; . . . the Amalekites may thus have naturally fought for the oasis of the Desert." (2) The recollection of an ancient injury. The Amalekites were to a great extent, if not entirely, descendants of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12, 16); and is it not probable that the old enmity between Jacob and Esau had something to do with their attack upon Israel? Esau had forgiven Jacob the injury, and God had pardoned his sin, yet the memory of his base act was handed down from generation to generation of the posterity of Esau, arousing their hatred against the posterity of Jacob. Thus the memory of evil is perpetuated, and thus evil actions live and work for long ages after they who did them have passed away, and the sin of the father in its penalty falls upon the children of many following generations. Here is warning, &c.

Let us now view this brief chapter of ancient history in three aspects:—

I. *As an illustration of the working of God in human history, or of the means and methods by which He effects His purposes.*

Notice the steps that were taken and the means that were employed to vanquish the Amalekites. Joshua was appointed general; he selected the most suitable men to fight the battle; for their encouragement Moses ascended the hill, &c. How, then, did God give

them this victory, and in so doing accomplish His own design in the matter?

1. *By their own efforts.* After the way in which God had dealt with them, they might not very unreasonably have thought, when they were attacked, that without their effort He would deliver them. He led them forth out of Egypt without exertion on their part. When they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host, they had only to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." But had that treatment been continued, they would have remained a nation of slaves or children in spirit. If they are to become a nation of men, they must be roused to effort. So they have to fight the Amalekites.

2. *By the efforts of the most efficient.* Amongst the Israelites there were no trained soldiers; they must have been ill-armed, and had long been inured to servitude. In these circumstances, at the command of Moses, Joshua selected the fittest men to fight the battle.

3. *By the efforts of the most efficient under a most skilful and heroic general.* Joshua was a man of remarkable genius and skill as a leader of men. Considering his previous condition, his generalship is very extraordinary.

4. *By the efforts of the most efficient under an able general, with wise arrangements for arousing and maintaining courage.* At this time the Israelites were anything but heroes: they were sadly deficient of manliness. The rod in the hand of Moses would tend to awaken memory, confidence, and courage. What wonders had been wrought with that rod on former occasions! &c. (a)

5. And in addition to all other things, *the victory was obtained by prayer.* Moses on the hill was, doubtless, engaged in prayer to God. His prayer had power with God. To Him he ascribed the victory. "Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; i.e., Jehovah my banner. (b)

God works by means. He never uses supernatural means where natural ones will accomplish the end. He uses

means eminently adapted to secure the end. He uses men as His instruments; and never does for us that which we can do for ourselves. And in our works He would have us use our utmost skill and power. He does not need our wisdom, and He certainly does not need our ignorance or folly. The Israelites planned and fought as if all depended upon themselves; Moses prayed as if all depended upon God; and when victory was attained they ascribed it to Him. Let us "go, and do likewise." (c)

II. As an illustration of the work and warfare of every good man.

1. *The Christian life involves difficulty, toil, and conflict* (1 Cor. ix. 24-27; Eph. vi. 10-18; Heb. xii. 1-4; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9). We cannot live a Christian life and do Christian work without battling with enemies. We must fight against (1) "the world," or evil in society; (2) "the flesh," or evil in ourselves; and (3) "the devil," or malign spiritual influences. (d)

2. *In the work and warfare of the Christian life we need the help of others.* "We are members one of another." "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," &c. But we are chiefly dependent on Jesus Christ. He is our *General*, our Joshua. "The Captain of our salvation." He is our *Intercessor*, our Moses. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." His uplifted hands are never weary, &c. And as the uplifted rod encouraged the Israelites, so *the presence of Christ nerves the spirit for the fight.* "Looking unto Jesus" is the true attitude of every Christian both in work and in warfare.

3. *By earnest, believing effort, and the help of God, the work and warfare of the Christian life will be ultimately accomplished and crowned with victory.* Effort, or no effort; effort with God, or effort without God; upon the determination of these the issues of life's work and warfare depend. No effort, or effort without God, means failure: personal effort with God means success, victory.

III. As an illustration of the work and warfare of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The call of God to the Church is to take possession of the world in His name and for Him ; and to accomplish this its members must battle with the Amalekites of crime, vice, ignorance, superstition, religious indifference, &c. In the prosecution of this work and warfare—

1. *The Church needs leaders.* The Lord Jesus is our great Leader : He is “head over all to the Church.” But we need subordinate leaders also. No leaders means no rule, no discipline, no order ; but anarchy, incompetence, confusion.

2. *The labours of all and every one are required.* In the battle Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Hur, and all the fighting men, were occupied, while the others were employed in guarding the women and children, the flocks and herds, and the baggage. In the Church there is work for every one, &c. This is a correction (1) to those who think they can do nothing ; (2) to those who think they can do anything and everything. Every one should work, and every one should do his own work.

3. *The Church succeeds in her efforts*

in proportion as she maintains her communication with Heaven. (Comp. Exod. xvii. 11.) Our great Intercessor ever prays. But much depends upon our own prayers. The praying church is the working church, and the conquering church.

4. *The greatest men in the Church are dependent upon the help of the smallest men.* Moses needed the aid of Hur. In these days ministers in some cases are left to pray alone, work alone, fight alone.

5. *Success or failure often depends upon comparatively small and feeble men.* If Hur had not been with Moses, Israel would probably have been defeated. Success in the enterprises of the Church depends upon every man doing his own work, however obscure and humble it may be.

6. *The ultimate victory of the Church is certain.* “Jehovah is my banner.” The battle is not ours but God’s. Battle of truth and right against error, &c. (e)

7. *The victory will be ascribed to God in Christ.* “Joshua discomfited Amalek.” “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Unto Him be all the glory. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power,” &c. (Rev. v. 12, 13).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Joshua led forth his men to the field ; and Moses mounted the hill, accompanied by Aaron his brother, and by Hur, who is supposed to have been his brother-in-law. Here Moses stood, and held up his hand on high, with the wonder-working rod therein. It was no doubt held up, in the first instance, as a kind of banner or signal, to be seen by the warring host below, and designed to operate as a continual incentive to their valour and prowess while engaged in the contest ; and the sight of this symbol and instrument of the power which had worked so wondrously on their behalf, could not fail to nerve their arms with new vigour every time their eyes were turned towards it. Yet it needed but little reflection to assure them that, as is very manifest, there was no inherent virtue in the rod to produce this effect ; and that it derived all its efficacy from the Divine appointment, as a visible symbol of that unseen succour and strength which God was pleased to minister to

His militant servants fighting His battle, and maintaining the high glory of His name.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) Moses was eminently an intercessor with God for the people committed to his charge ; and there can be no question that, in connection with these external and symbolical actions, fervent prayer for the Divine aid was offered ; the uplifting of the rod being thus merely an accompaniment of the earnest intercessions which breathed from the lips and hearts of the venerable men upon the mountain. And even if this were not the case, the circumstances and the result are strikingly analogous to those of intercessory prayer, and suggestive of them.—*Ibid.*

On the power of intercession, illustrations are given on pp. 183, 225.

(c) We notice here grouped together that hallowed combination of agencies which ought never to be separated—the dependence upon Heaven, with the use of appointed

means. The rod in the hand of Moses, and the sword in that of Joshua; the embattled host in the valley below, and the praying hand in the mount above—all were necessary in the Divine economy to the victory of Israel over his foes. So must it be in our own conflict with the Amalek that lies ambushed within, to hinder our progress to the mount of God. We may expect no manifestation of the Lord's power, no interference of His goodness, but as the result of a blessing upon our own zealous conflict with temptation. "Prayer without active duty is mockery of God. He who entreats deliverance from the onset and power of evil, yet never makes an effort in his own behalf, nor strives against the sin that wars within him, draws nigh to God with his lips, but is wholly estranged from the fervour of that supplication that issues from the depths of the heart." Yet it was intended to be taught, and was most effectually taught by this example, that the uplifted hand of Moses contributed more to the safety of the Israelites

than their own hands—his rod more than their weapons of war; and accordingly their success fluctuates as he raises up or lets down his hands. In like manner will the Christian warfare be attended with little success, unless it be waged in the practice of unceasing earnest prayer. It will never be known on this side the Lord's second coming, how much His cause, and the work of individual salvation, have been advanced by "the effectual fervent prayer" of righteous men. And it is surely a cheering reflection in the heat and burden of the day of battle, that while we are contending below, faithful servants of God have ascended the hill of spiritual prayer, and are imploring blessings upon our efforts.—*Ibid.*

Another illustration on the Divine use of suitable means in accomplishing His designs, appears on p. 539.

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 416. (b)

(e) Illustrations on the *Certainty of the Christian Victory* appear on pp. 416, 417.

ISRAEL AND AMALEK.

(Verse 14.)

The Israelites had been redeemed from Egypt, and were on their way to Canaan. This, therefore, is a picture of the Christian life, and is full of teaching to all believers. Taking it in this light, we see—

I. The Christian's example.

1. *To fight.* (1) An aggressive fight. "Go." (2) To be done wisely. "Choose you out men." (3) Earnestly. "Fight." Hard blows. No parley. (4) Continually. "War with Amalek from generation to generation."

2. *To pray.* (1) For those who fight. (2) Earnestly. Not growing weary. Hard blows and hard prayers. (3) Confidently. "The rod." Symbol of past mercies. (4) Unitedly. "Moses, Aaron, and Hur,"

&c. Promises given to two or three.

II. The Christian's encouragement,

1. *Christ, our Captain* (Joshua). (1) With us to cheer. Wellington's presence on battle-field. (2) With us to direct. (3) With us to defend.

2. *Christ, our Intercessor* (Moses).

(1) He prays while we work. (2) He prays continually. Never grows weary. (3) He prays successfully.

III. The Christian's prospect.

1. *Of certain victory.* The result is sure. Every foe shall be overcome.

2. *Of certain glory.* While God's servants ascribe all the glory to Him (Exod. xvii. 15), He, nevertheless, delights to honour them (*Ibid.*, 13).—*D. Macmillan.*

"IN THE DESERT OF SINAI": THE MORAL LAW.

(Verse 15.)

The Israelites were encamped in the desert of Sinai for the space of nearly a year (Exod. xix. 1; chap. x. 11, 12). Although we cannot attempt to consider their history during that time, yet we

cannot pass over this encampment without a brief notice of two or three of its principal events. And here let us notice the *Moral Law* (Exod. xx. 1-17).

The moral law which was delivered

by Moses from Mount Sinai was distinguished by many peculiar and blessed characteristics.

I. It based its precepts upon the existence and authority of God.

To believe in God is not one of the ten commandments. This fact is presupposed in the preface to them, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt," &c. This is the foundation of all that follows. And as God is the Lord their God, and has proved His right to issue His commands by His wonderful deeds in their behalf, so it is fitting that the first four precepts in the code should concern His own relation to the people of His choice, referring (1) to the necessity of having no other God but Him; (2) to the spiritual mode in which He, a spirit, must be worshipped; (3) to the reverence in which His very Name should be regarded; and (4) to the duty of devoting one whole day of the seven to His worship. The large space given to God in the ten commandments is quite in consonance with the theocratic nature of the Jewish economy. God in it was the leading thought, man secondary; whereas in the Christian dispensation, through the union of the two natures in Christ, it is hard to say which is made more prominent. It is, verily, the economy of the *God-man*.

II. It was a strict and stern, but far from being an unjust or cruel system.

It denied no enjoyment that was natural, and it inculcated no duty that was harsh. None of the commandments were "grievous." All conduced at once to the happiness of man and to the glory of God. The first precept secured the Jews from the distraction of mind and heart connected with the worship of many gods. The second inculcated a form of worship less cumbrous and burdensome, as well as more spiritual, than idolatry. The third, in consecrating the name of God, taught His worshippers to reverence and love Him better. The fourth provided for them a day of grateful rest and refreshment

amid their toils, and held out, typically, the prospect of a future and serener existence. The fifth was expressly sealed by a promise, that to those who obeyed it, their days should be long upon the land. The sixth, in forbidding murder, tended to prevent the misery which springs from it to all concerned, either as actors or sufferers, and to cherish that spirit of love and mutual forbearance which is productive of so much true happiness. The seventh commanded men to shun those ill-regulated passions and practices which create such remorse, satiety, hardness of heart, and family disturbance. The eighth secured the rights of property. The ninth taught the value of truthfulness, and the duty of regarding our neighbour's good name as if it were our own. The tenth sought to crush, in the secret recesses of the heart, the seeds of all evil conduct, and thereby to cleanse and sweeten the inner nature.

III. It was singularly well suited to the age and to the people to whom it was promulgated.

That age was early, and that people was rude and child-like. The precepts of the law required, therefore, to be dogmatic, to be strict, to be free in their expression from all abstract terms and recondite reasonings, to be frequently repeated, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." All this we find characteristic of the law of Moses.

IV. Another evidence of the divinely-wise applicability of this law to the Jewish people we find in certain circumstances which tended at once to guard, to sanction, to enforce, recommend, and to illustrate it.

One of these was the grandeur and terror connected with its announcement from Sinai. . . . The tables of stone still remained, written by the very finger of God, and were cherished with the highest veneration. Moses, after he had finished the writings of the book of the law, deposited it with his people in the following remarkable words, "he commanded the Levites,

which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book," &c. (Deut. xxxi. 25, 26). . . . The splendid appurtenances of the Jewish worship were meant to illustrate the principles of the law, moral as well as ceremonial, to the imperfectly developed minds of the people. . . . Had the law gone forth naked, it would have had little effect upon such a people; but it went forth in beautiful costume and in dazzling armour, and did a great, although a temporary, work.

V. The system itself is the best proof of its Divine origin.

Its very defects and limitations, as well as its glories, showed it to be no human contrivance; its imperfections arose not from the miscalculations of weakness, but from the foresight of wisdom. . . . Life and immortality were reserved for the illumination of Christ. But how wonderful, that without these ideas of rewards and punishments in a future life being very prominently brought before the minds of men, a national polity was not only possible, but continued for a long time powerful and prosperous!—From "*Alpha and Omega*," by G. Gilfillan, M.A.

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI; THE GOLDEN CALF.

(Verse 15.)

Let us see what instruction we can gather from this impressive portion (Exod. xxxii.) of sacred history.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites were analogous to the circumstances of a large portion of mankind at the present day.

1. *The Israelites had witnessed a terrific display of the Divine character.* The attributes of sovereignty, justice, holiness, and truth, had been set forth in the most impressive manner, so as to come in contact not only with the thoughts, the feelings, but the very senses. Now there is something analogous to this in the experience of most at some period or other, especially of those who live under the sound of the Gospel. The hearer of the true Gospel lives in the atmosphere of Sinai, as well as of Calvary; he hears of the justice and truth of God, as well as of His mercy; and if he do not stand in awe of the sterner attributes, as well as rejoice in the milder, then you may be assured that he is hearing the Gospel to no purpose: he has not even begun to comprehend its true import.

2. *The Israelites had just given their solemn affirmative response to God's covenant*, as it had been read to them by Moses; and they were bound by every consideration of honour, of gratitude,

of duty, to obey it. In like manner, there are multitudes at this day, all over Christendom, who have professed not only a belief in the Divine testimony, but obedience to the Divine precepts.

II. The conduct of the Israelites in making and worshipping the calf, in those peculiar circumstances, was analogous to much that is passing in the world around us.

What rendered the conduct of the Israelites so exceedingly strange and criminal was, that it should have occurred amidst the awful scenes of Horeb. You have been sitting under the preaching of the Gospel from the time that you were able to understand it; its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, have been set before you in every variety of form, while you have always had the written Word within your reach, with every facility for studying and understanding it. And what demonstrations have you made in these circumstances? Why, you have been guilty of idolatry just as truly as the Israelites were; you have worshipped gold just as truly as they did; and the fact that they chose the form of a calf, and you choose some other form, makes no difference as to the actual guilt in the eye of Heaven.

Time has been when God's hand rested heavily upon you, and death, perhaps, came into your very chamber, and you saw some one carried to the grave for whom you felt that you could have given even your life. But this affliction found you a worshipper of the world, and it had no effect in rendering you permanently otherwise.

You have sometimes had your lot cast in the midst of the effusions of God's Holy Spirit; and go where you might, the anxious enquiry on the one side, and the song of thanksgiving on the other, was falling upon your ear. But neither the one nor the other was heard to escape *your* lips. You had your golden calf, and that was enough for *you*.

III. The guilt of the Israelites in making and worshipping the golden calf was not a little enhanced by the peculiar circumstances under which the sin was committed; and there is a corresponding aggravation from a similar cause attending many of those idolatrous attachments which are often witnessed in our day.

Everything around them told of the Divine presence; everything that they saw and heard was adapted to dissuade them from this impious outrage. And yet they heeded it not,—they became gross idolators within the sound of Jehovah's voice, within the very blaze of His glory.

Nor is the case dissimilar as it is often witnessed at the present day among ourselves. God speaks now by

His *Providence*, by His *Word*, by His *Spirit*. He has spoken through the voice of your own *conscience*. You, not less than the Israelites, have been sinning while God has been very near to you. You, as truly as they, have been idolators amid scenes which ought to overwhelm you with a sense of the Divine presence; and whether this circumstance must not materially aggravate your guilt and condemnation, judge ye.

IV. God did not suffer this sin of the Israelites to go unpunished; neither can those who are guilty of a similar sin at the present day expect to escape punishment.

The first part of their punishment consisted in the destruction of their idol. Does not this conduct of God towards the Israelites illustrate a general principle of His administration?

Moses instituted a terrible work of death in respect to the idolators. Sometimes God performs a mighty retributive work in the sinner's bosom through the power of conscience, and months and years of unmitigated inward torture seem to change life itself into a living death. Sometimes persons of this character are cut off in so sudden and striking a manner, that we can hardly suppress the conviction that there is something judicial in the circumstances of their death.

There are a thousand voices charging you to forsake your idols, and to make Jehovah your portion.—*W. B. Sprague, D.D.*

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: LESSONS FROM THE WORSHIP OF THE CALF.

(Verse 15, with *Exod.* xxxii. 1-5.)

Human nature being the same, history is in principle constantly repeating itself. The facts of Bible history are recorded that we may get at underlying truths, such truths being God's teaching to us. In the event to which reference is here made, we observe—

I. The difficulty to human nature of faith in the unseen.

"This Moses, we wot not what is become of him."

II. The impatience of man at God's method of working.

Moses delayed in the mount. The people would not wait for the man with God's Word.

III. That man will have a god.

"Up, make us gods." They are

often *manufactured* gods. The man who would be popular must make gods to go before the people. It is the ruin of a people when they worship false gods. It is the very height of folly, when men of science, art, or manufactures, say of *their own works*: "These be thy gods, O Israel."

IV. The effect of slavish adherence to old ideas.

In one sense, at least, they were not out of Egypt—the sacred ox. See the importance of keeping the young from early impressions of error. Let none expose themselves to false teaching; it may bring them into bondage.

V. Their extravagant expenditure for the gratification of a fancy (vers. 2, 3).

People often spend more in superstition than Christians for the truth. Christians spend far more for *luxury, pleasure, fancy*, than for *Christ*. Who amongst us is willing to do as much for Jesus as these people did to procure a golden calf?

VI. How art is desecrated to sinful purposes (ver. 4).

So in building at Babel; in worship at Babylon, and Ephesus, and Athens. Abundant proofs in our picture galleries and museums, and also in our modern theatres, gin palaces, &c.

VII. That if God is dishonoured, man is misled, humiliated, ruined.

"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—*W. Whale*.

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: MOSES'S COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE MOUNT.

(Verse 15, with *Exod.* xxxiv. 29-35.)

There was a great deal of what was miraculous, no doubt, in this transaction, but there is much also that, properly improved, will tend to our spiritual edification.

I. The cause of that radiance which appeared in the face of Moses.

The converse which Moses held with God in the mount, was the cause of that glory which rested on his countenance. He ascended the mountain to hold intercourse with God, and while he talked with Him his face shone. In the account of this transaction, there are two particulars worthy of notice.

1. *Moses offered sacrifices before ascending to hold communion with God* (see *Exod.* xxiv.). This indicates a great principle connected with all true religion—that religion has always rested on sacrifice (*Gen.* iv. 4; *Heb.* xi. 4). The Jewish religion, in all its ritual and services, rested upon this great principle. The distinctive feature of Christianity embraces the same principle. One of our great Christian privileges is to ascend the mountain and hold communion with God. But to be thus brought together, there

must be something done on both sides: On the part of God there must be utterance given to the voice of mercy and love, there must be a way of access to His throne; on the part of man there must be faith. God in Christianity has made three great provisions to this end—a sacrifice, a mediation, and spiritual influences. (1) *The sacrifice of Christ is the standing medium of communication and fellowship between God and man.* The atonement has only been offered once, yet the effect is everlasting. In all His transactions with us, God has ever regard to the sacrifice of Christ; He never pardons a sinner, but through the atonement; He never adopts the prodigal, and invests him with the rights, privileges, and honours of a child, but through the atonement; He never confers spiritual joy, or any other blessing, upon the believer, but through the atonement. (2) *There is a provision of mediation.* Mediation does not merely embrace the office of intercessor, but it is a great sublime scheme of spiritual and providential administration. Christ sits upon the throne; to Him all power in heaven

and earth is given; it is exercised with reference to the great purposes of atonement. (3) *Spiritual influence also is a part of Christianity.* This is inseparably connected with the great work of our Lord and Saviour. We might as well talk of Christianity without a Saviour, as of Christianity without the Holy Ghost.

These are the provisions which Christianity makes for our ascending the mount to hold communion with God; let us avail ourselves of them, and go up confidently with the blood of atonement to hear His voice, to taste His love, and to receive the fulness of joy.

2. *Moses ascended the mountain alone.* This opens to us another principle of religion: it is this—that in all respects it is personal. Our devotional exercises are of this nature. It is true that we meet in public fellowship, but there is a sense in which the soul sits solitary in the midst of a mighty multitude. Our emotions are all personal. In His dealings with us God addresses us as individuals. Pardon, renewal, eternal life, are bestowed on individuals. These blessings are all personal. Duties are personal: one cannot discharge the duties of another. Enjoyments are personal. The closet is the place where we must test our religious character. There is something suspicious when our joy is only connected with public devotional exercises; but when we are alone and enjoy communion with God, then may we regard our feelings as genuine.

II The nature of the light and glory which rested on the face of Moses.

There is a great mystery in this, but

it was intended to be symbolical of a better glory. We shall pass over the symbolical meaning, and make some remarks of a practical bearing.

1. *Intercourse with God will be productive of joy to the soul.* There will be rapturous joy. How can it be otherwise when the Saviour first reveals Himself to the sinner's heart? How can it be otherwise when a man finds himself adopted into the Divine family, a partaker of the love of God, and admitted to daily fellowship?

2. *Intercourse with God must have the effect of expanding the capacity and of enlarging the soul.* The religious man can enjoy every form of truth and knowledge in the world in common with the man who is solely devoted to its pursuits; but, unlike him, he has the infinite prospect of the glories of heaven and eternal life.

3. *Intercourse with God will produce beauty of character.* We cannot enjoy Divine grace, love, sanctification, and the privileges of the Christian state, but our internal purity will exhibit itself by a spotless life.

III. The conduct of Moses when he descended from the mount.

"He put a vail on his face." Religion in this life is often veiled under circumstances which obscure its grandeur. For instance, what a contrast there exists betwixt the employments of many Christians and their enjoyments; by the one they are almost assimilated to the beasts of the earth, by the other they are allied to heaven. Poverty, dark providences, and affliction, often veil the spiritual state of good men.—*D.*, in "*One Hundred Sketches of Sermons.*"

ILLUSTRATION.

The effect of the vision is so great that when Moses comes down from the mount, with the new tables of testimony in his hand, which God had inscribed with the commandments of the law, his face is seen to be shining. He has no need, in faint and feeble words, to tell with whom he had been conversing; his face becomes eloquent, and rays out the tidings. Even as the red cloud, which the

evening sun has coloured, continues red after he has set, so there is a relief radiance on the face of Moses from that of God. "The skin of his face shone," and it added to the effect, that he "wist not that it shone." Beauty is never so beautiful as when unconscious. Strength is never so strong as when leaning on its right arm. Terror is never so terrible as when it forgets itself. The

sun seems so glorious, and the moon so lovely, and the stars so pure, because we feel that they know not that they are. And thus the unconscious shining of the countenance of Moses struck awe into all beholders. They were afraid to come nigh unto him. He seemed insulated in the sea of glory still. It seemed God's own face that

they gazed at. Yet it was only from the terror of others that he learned his own glorious appearance. And after talking to the trembling Israelites for a time, he at last put on a veil, which shaded the splendours of his face, and which he only dropped when he entered into the tabernacle to meet with God.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

KIBROTH-HATTA'AVAH.

(Verse 16.)

The history of the people at this encampment has already engaged our attention in chap. xi. See pp. 179-212.

HAZEROTH.

(Verse 17.)

This encampment is remarkable as the scene of the sedition of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, and its punishment (chap. xii.). See pp. 213-227.

RITHMAH:

(Verse 18.)

The history of the people at this encampment was both momentous and mournful in a very great degree. It is recorded in chaps. xiii. and xiv. See *Explanatory Note* on the verse, and pp. 228-269.

NOTHING BUT NAMES.

(Verses 19-36.)

We have here the names of the places at which the people encamped during the years of penal wanderings. What took place at any of these stations we know not; and the places themselves, with the exception of Ezion Geber, are unknown. The paragraph is little more than mere names, and suggests the following reflections.

I. The tendency of sin to deprive life of any worthy significance.

In the history of this people there was little worth recording for 38 years. Sin is prone to rob life of all true and noble elements, of inspiration and helpfulness to good, of brave and earnest enterprize; and to bring

people into such a state that they have no history to write, or no history worth writing.

II. The tendency of sin to retard progress.

Here are a number of journeys, but no advance towards their destination. There was movement without progress. The unbelief, cowardice, and rebellion of the people against God caused this (chap. xiv.): Sin takes the wheels off the chariots of human progress, so that they drag slowly and heavily along. Nay, it even completely arrests progress. This is true of communities. For the space of almost 38 years the progress of this nation was held back

by their sins. It is true also of individuals.

III. The importance of remembering the losses which sin causes us.

For this reason there is some record of these seemingly fruitless years—these penal wanderings.

1. *Such remembrance should promote humility.* "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee," &c. (Deut. viii. 2).

2. *Such remembrance should restrain from sin.* The recollection of the loss and injury which sin has caused us is calculated to cause us to abhor and avoid sin. And when it involves loss and trouble to a whole generation of people, the recollection of it is fitted to lead the coming generations to shun the sins of their ancestors (comp. *Psa.* lxxviii. 3-8).

IV. The mutability of earthly and temporal things.

When this itinerary was written, these seventeen places were well known; but at the present time of only one of them is anything whatever known of a certainty. Places great and famous in days of yore, have vanished almost as completely.

"Cities numberless,
Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Babylon, and Troy,
And rich Phenicia—they are blotted out,
Half-raz'd from memory, and their very name
And being in dispute."—*H. K. White.*

Therefore, "love not the world, neither the things in the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17). "Seek those things which are above," &c. (*Col.* iii. 1, 2). (a)

V. The unsettled character of human life upon earth.

"They departed from Rithmah and pitched at Rimmon-parez. . . . And they journeyed from Rissah and pitched in Kehelathah. . . . And they removed from Mount Shapher and encamped in Haradah," &c. Such is the character of the record—a record of removals, &c. And such is human life in this world. "This is not your rest." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (b)

The suggestions of this paragraph may be developed also with these two inquiries as the principal divisions.

I. Why have we here nothing but names?

II. Seeing that we have here nothing but names, why are these names recorded?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) God has written it on every page of His creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change. The friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. Our very selves are altering. The basis of our being may remain, but our views, tastes, feelings, are no more our former self than the oak is the acorn. The very face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the gray mouldering ruins to tell of what was once. Our labourers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth—skeletons of men, to whom life once was dear—urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. To-day the shot of the enemy defaces and blackens monuments and venerable temples, which remind the Christian that into the deep silence of eternity the Roman world has passed away. And so things are going. It is a work of weaving and unweaving. All passes. Names that the world heard once in

thunder are scarcely heard at the end of centuries—good or bad, they pass. A few years ago and *we* were not. A few centuries further, and we reach the age of beings of almost another race. Nimrod was the conqueror and scourge of his far-back age. Tubal Cain gave to the world the iron which was the foundation of every triumph of men over nature. We have their names now. But the philologist is uncertain whether the name of the first is real or mythical—and the traveller excavates the sand-mounds of Nineveh to wonder over the records which he cannot decipher. Tyrant and benefactor, both are gone. And so all things are moving on to the last fire which shall wrap the world in conflagration, and make all that has been the recollection of a dream. This is the history of the world, and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. Like as when you watch the melting tints of the evening sky—purple-crimson, gorgeous gold, a few pulsa-

tions of quivering light, and it is all gone :—
“we are such stuff as dreams are made of.”—
F. W. Robertson, M.A.

(*b*) For illustrations on this point, see pp.
163 (*b*), 409 (*g*).

“FROM KADESH UNTO ABEL-SHITTIM IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.”

(*Verses 37-49.*)

The history of the people in these journeys and encampments has already engaged much of our attention in our progress through this book. In the

Explanatory Notes on the verses the chapters and verses are given for the history of each encampment.

THE EXPULSION OF THE CANAANITES.

(*Verses 50-56.*)

Consider—

I. The imperative command.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan,” &c. (verses 50-54).

1. *To utterly expel the inhabitants of Canaan.* “When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you; . . . and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein.” This command had been given to them previously in Exod. xxiii. 31-33; xxxiv. 11-17; and it was repeated in a more severe form in Deut. vii. 1-6. In this latter place they are commanded to “utterly destroy them,” and that without mercy. And both in Exodus and in Deut. one reason for this stern command is assigned, viz., that their presence in the land would be a source of peril to the Israelites, leading them to enter into social alliances with them and to conform to their idolatrous practices, and so awakening the anger of the Lord against them to their own destruction.

Learn: *The sin and peril of evil associations.* (*a*)

2. *To completely destroy all idolatrous objects and places.* “Destroy all their pictures”—idols of stone—“and de-

stroy all their molten images”—or idols cast from copper—“and quite pluck down all their high places” (comp. Exod. xxiii. 24; xxxiv. 13-15; Deut. vii. 5; xii. 2, 3). Nothing was to be preserved for the gratification of antiquarian tastes, or as curious relics of foreign customs. There must be an utter destruction of all and everything that had been associated with idolatry; because such things were offensive to God and perilous to man. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” &c. (Exod. xx. 3-5).

Learn: *The heinousness of the sin of idolatry in the sight of God.* (*b*)

3. *To equitably divide the land.* “And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families,” &c. (verse 54). We have already noticed this in chap. xxvi. 53-56 (see pp. 502, 503).

4. *The authority by which they were to do these things.* They had the authority of Jehovah their God. He gave them the command; and He assigned this reason for it: “for I have given you the land to possess it.” He is the great Proprietor of all things. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” He has a right to do what He will with His own. But in addition to this, “the iniquity of the Amorites” was now “full.” The filthiest abominations were practised amongst

them, they were sunk in the grossest immoralities. "For the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. ix. 4). So utterly depraved were the Canaanites that it is said that "the land itself vomited them out" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). (c)

II. The solemn warning.

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass," &c. (vers. 55, 56). They are here solemnly warned that, if they failed to obey the Divine commands now given to them,—

1. *Those whom they spared would become their tormentors.* "Those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye shall dwell." "Under these metaphors," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the continual mischief that should be done to them, both in soul and body, by these idolators, is set forth in a very expressive manner. What can be more vexatious than a continual goading of each side, so that the attempt to avoid the one throws the body more forcibly on the other? And what can be more distressing than a continual pricking in the eye, harassing the mind, tormenting the body, and *extinguishing the sight?*" "That which we are willing should tempt us, we shall find will vex us."

2. *The God whom they disobeyed would disinherit them.* "Moreover it

shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them." This solemn warning was repeated by Joshua (Josh. xxiii. 13): but Israel disregarded it, and reaped the bitter result. "Subsequent history proves," as Scott remarks, "that these denunciations were real *prophecies*, which have been wonderfully accomplished, even to this day. During many ages, the remnant of the devoted nations were extremely troublesome to the Israelites, even as 'pricks in the eyes and thorns in the side,' which would be a constant and almost intolerable torture: and at length, as they persisted in imitating their idolatries and atrocious crimes, they were punished as the Lord proposed to punish the Canaanites; being expelled from their country with tremendous slaughter, first by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and at length more completely by the Romans."

Learn:—

The importance of zeal and thoroughness in waging war against those Canaanites of the heart, our indwelling sins. "If we show any quarter to our sinful propensities, they will gather strength by indulgence, mar the comfort of our lives, and perhaps be 'pricks in our eyes and thorns in our sides' when we lie upon a death-bed." "If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out; if we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls." (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This lesson is illustrated on pp. 308, 428.

(b) All sin is hateful to God, and none but the cleansed, perfect soul shall stand before Him in the presence of His glory; nor any in whom iniquity hath dominion shall stand accepted in the presence of His grace; but yet no particular sin is so hateful to Him as idolatry is. For this is not only a trespassing against His laws, but a disclaiming or rejecting His very sovereignty itself. To give a prince irreverent language, and to break his laws, is punishable; but to pull him out of his throne, and set up a scullion in it, and give him the honour and obedience of a king, this is another kind of matter, and much more in-

tolerable. The first commandment is not like the rest, which require only obedience to particular laws in a particular action; but it establisheth the very relations of sovereign and subject, and requires a constant acknowledgment of these relations, and makes it high treason against the God of heaven in any that shall violate that command. Every crime is not treason; it is one thing to miscarry in a particular case, and another thing to have other gods before and besides the Lord, the only God. Now, this is the sin of every worldling: he hath taken down God from the throne in his soul, and set up the flesh and the world in His stead; these he valueth, and magnifieth, and delighteth in;

these have his very heart, while God that made it and redeemed him is set light by.—*Richard Baxter.*

(c) While, on the one hand, the donation of this land to the Israelites was an act of the Lord's free favour, the denial of it to the Canaanites was no less an act of His retributive justice—of such justice as it behoved the moral Governor of the world to administer against a people laden with iniquity. Gen. xv. 13-16 is a passage which proves this clearly. Abraham is there informed that, before his posterity would receive that goodly heritage, a long period of four hundred years must elapse, great part of which would be spent by them under oppression in a land which was not theirs. Eventually they should be brought forth with great substance; and in the "fourth generation they shall come hither again." Why is this return so long deferred? Why not until the fourth generation? Hear the reason: "*For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*"

These last words are important for more than one reason. First, they exclude all human right of the Hebrews to Palestine; for if such a right had existed, why, for its being enforced, should the filling up of the iniquity of the Amorites be required? Secondly, if the cause why Abraham's descendants were not now, but after a long interval, to obtain possession of the Promised Land, was, that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, it is thereby equally intimated that this filling up of their iniquity would justify, if not demand, the Divine judgment, which under existing circumstances would have been unjust—in the same way as God, before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by His immediate decree, first of all permitted the abandoned depravity of the inhabitants most notoriously to manifest itself.

When the time was fully come, the Canaanites became a doomed people—doomed to expulsion or extermination by the Israelites, to whom was committed the sword of judgment, and who were the destined inheritors of the land of which the Canaanites had by that time proved themselves unworthy. This solemn doom is expressed in the Hebrew by a peculiar word (*cherem*), which is always applied to such devotedness to destruction in vindication of the Divine justice; and this is the term constantly applied to the Canaanites, as to a people who, by their enormities, had dishonoured the moral government of God, and were, therefore, to be constrained, by the judgment inflicted upon them, to glorify that government, and thereby to set forth the great truth, that there is a pure and holy Ruler of the nations.

Then, again, the Israelites, favoured as they were for their fathers' sake, were apprised that even they held the land by no other tenure than that which the Canaanites were to be destroyed for infringing. Over and over again were they warned, that if they fell

into the same dreadful transgressions for which the Canaanites had been cast out, they would subject themselves to the same doom—be like them destroyed—like them cast out of the good land which they had defiled. We are not left altogether in the dark as to the nature of the abominations which pervaded the land, and which cried to God to show Himself as one abhorring iniquity, and to prove that the world was not left fatherless of His care. In one place, the sacred text, after enumerating various cases of unchastity and impiety of the vilest kind, goes on to say, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled; therefore do I visit the iniquity of the land upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). In another place, the Israelites are solemnly warned against imitating the conduct of their predecessors, lest they incur the same penalties: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord which He hateth have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods" (Deut. xii. 30, 31). What more emphatic testimony can be required than this?—*John Kitto, D.D.*

God is Sovereign of the universe. He has a right to dispose of any part of it as He will. God is also infinitely just. He governs His Kingdom in strictest accordance with justice. To punish the guilty is a just act. The Canaanites were guilty. By a long continued course of rebellion and abominable crime, they had become not only altogether corrupt, but absolutely hopeless. Their iniquity became full. Then God drove them out to make room for His own people.

A great truth is sometimes either forgotten or ignored by the sentimental school of philosophers, that "the punishment of the wicked is as indispensable a part of moral government as the reward of the good." The remarks of Kalisch on this subject are admirable: "If we survey the Biblical system with regard to this subject, we are surprised by its grandeur and comprehensiveness. The Canaanites themselves were not the original inhabitants of the land; they settled there after having destroyed most of the earlier tribes—the Rephaim, the Emim, the Anakim, and others. They had therefore had a personal experience of how God punished wantonness and impiety; but they were not warned by it: they gradually fell into the same vices and crimes; and they were doomed to suffer the same extreme judgment. But whilst the measure of their iniquity was filling, God reared in a foreign land the future occupants of their abode: the degeneracy of the Canaanites kept pace with the increase and development of the Israelites. However great and awful the former might have been, the God of mercy protracted and

delayed long the day of judgment ; and however glorious Abraham's merit was, on account of which his descendants were destined to possess Canaan, the God of justice did not accelerate their deliverance from the oppression in Egypt, which they had deserved by their faithlessness. The Israelites, regenerated by their trials in the desert, were the instruments of chastisement to the Canaanites ; as, later, the Assyrians and Babylonians, though unconscious of their office and mission, were used as the rod of destruction against the Israelites. This is the only view

in which the occupation of Palestine by the Hebrews can be regarded according to the Biblical allusions."—*J. L. Porter, D.D., LL.D.*

(d) Use sin as it will use you ; spare it not, for it will not spare you : it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world : use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you ; and though it kill your bodies, it shall not be able to kill your souls ; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there.—*Richard Baxter.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter consists of two portions : (1) the boundaries of the Promised Land (vers. 1-15), and (2) the names of the persons who were appointed to distribute the land (vers. 16-29).

Verse 2. *Canaan with the coasts thereof.* Keil and Del. : "Canaan according to its boundaries."

Verses 3-5. "Render : 'Then your south quarter shall extend from the wilderness of Zin which resteth upon the side of Edom. And your south border shall start from the extremity of the salt sea on the east ; and your border shall turn on the south to Maaleh-akrabbim, and shall pass on toward Zin, and the extent of its reach on the south shall be to Kadesh-barnea ; and it shall reach forth thence to Hazar-addar, and shall pass on to Azmon, and from Azmon the border shall turn to the river of Egypt, and its reach shall be to the sea.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. In the former part of this verse we have a general description of the southern boundary, which is afterwards more particularly defined.

The wilderness of Zin. See on chap. xii. 16 ; xiii. 21.

The utmost coast of the Salt Sea, &c. ; i.e. from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea in a south-westerly direction.

Verse 4. *The ascent of Akrabbim, or Maaleh-akrabbim, the ascent of scorpions, or "the scorpion pass."* Probably the pass of Sâfeh. So Stanley, Robinson,

Grove. Scorpions abound in the whole of this district.

Kadesh-barnea. See on chap. xiii. 26.

Hazar-addar=village of Addar. In Josh. xv. 3, it is mentioned as two places, "Hezron and Adar." The former was probably "the general name of a district of *Hazers*, or nomad hamlets, of which Addar was one." The site of neither of them has been discovered as yet. *Azmon* also has not yet been identified.

Verse 5. *The river of Egypt.* The brook of Egypt is the Wady el Arish, which is about seventy miles distant in a westerly direction from Kadesh.

Verse 6. *The great sea, i.e., the Mediterranean.*

For a border. Lit., "with its border," i.e., "with the border which it makes."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 7-9. "The northern boundary cannot be determined with certainty."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 7. *Mount Hor.* This is quite distinct from the Mount Hor upon which Aaron died (see p. 363). "The northern boundary started from the sea. Since Sidon was subsequently allotted to the most northern tribe—Asher (Josh. xix. 28), and was, so far as we know, the most northern town so allotted, it would seem probable that the northern boundary would commence at about that point ; that is, opposite to where the great range of Lebanon breaks down to the sea. The next

landmark, the entrance to Hamath, seems to have been determined by Dr. Porter as the pass at *Kalat el-Husn*, close to *Hums*, the ancient Hamath—at the other end of the range of Lebanon. Surely Mount Hor, then, can be nothing else than the great chain of Lebanon itself.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 8. *The entrance of Hamath.* Hamath here is the kingdom of Hamath, which was named after its chief city. “By ‘the entrance of Hamath,’ is to be understood the southern approach to Hamath, from the plain of Cœle Syria, lying between those two ranges of Lebanon, called Libanus and Antilibanus. Robinson and Porter understand it of the western approach to Hamath, from the Mediterranean.”—*Speaker's Comm.* See on chap. xiii. 21, p. 228.

“*Zedad*, now a large village, still bearing its ancient name (*Sadad*), about thirty miles east of the entrance of Hamath.”—*Ibid.*

Verse 9. “*Ziphron*, now *Zifrân*, has not been as yet visited by modern travellers, but is reported to lie about forty miles north-east of Damascus, near the road to Palmyra, and to contain extensive ruins.”—*Ibid.*

Hazar-enan, = “the fountain village.”

Probably “*Ayûn ed-Dara*, a fountain situate in the very heart of the great central chain of Antilibanus.”—*Ibid.* Most, if not all, of these conjectures or conclusions concerning the northern frontier are, however, disputed.

Verses 10-12. The eastern boundary.

Verse 10. *Shepham*. The site of this place has not been identified.

Verse 11. *Riblah*, on the east side of *Ain*. Not *Riblah* in the land of Hamath. Its exact site is unknown.

Sea of Chinnereth, i.e., Sea of Genesaret, or of Galilee.

Verse 12. *Down to Jordan*, &c. From the sea of Genesaret the boundary was the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

Verses 13-15. *Unto the nine tribes*, &c. Comp. chap. xxxii. 20-33.

Verses 16-29. Names of the men appointed to distribute the land. Of these, three only are known, viz., Eleazar, the high priest, head of the religious orders; Joshua, the general, head of the military order; and Caleb, the representative prince of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 18. *One prince of every tribe.* These princes were “the heads of the fathers of the tribes” (Josh. xiv. 1), not heads of tribes (see on chap. xiii. 2; p. 228).

THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1-15.)

Let us consider the following facts which are here either suggested or stated concerning the Promised Land.

I. The boundaries of this land were determined by God.

He here directs His servant Moses in this matter. “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel,” &c. We have in this an illustration of His providential ordering of human life. “He hath determined the bounds of their habitation.” “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” This may be regarded as—

1. *A reason for contentment.* “He

shall choose our inheritance for us.” “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (a)

2. *A rebuke of selfish greed*, whether on the part of individuals or of nations. (b)

II. The extent of this land was small.

Authorities are not agreed as to its extent; but even if we take the largest estimate, it was a small land, and remarkably narrow. Mr. Grove thus speaks of its size, and briefly sets forth its boundaries: “The Holy Land is not in size or physical characteristics pro-

portioned to its moral and historical position, as the theatre of the most momentous events in the world's history. It is but a strip of country about the size of Wales, less than 140 miles in length, and barely 40 in average breadth, on the very frontier of the East, hemmed in between the Mediterranean Sea on the one hand, and the enormous trench of the Jordan valley on the other, by which it is effectually cut off from the mainland of Asia behind it. On the north it is shut in by the high ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and by the chasm of the Litâny, which runs at their feet, and forms the main drain of their southern slope. On the south it is no less enclosed by the arid and inhospitable deserts of the upper part of the peninsula of Sinai, whose undulating wastes melt imperceptibly into the southern hills of Judea. The country thus roughly portrayed, and which, as before stated, is less than 140 miles in length, and not more than 40 in average breadth, is to all intents and purposes the whole Land of Israel. The northern portion is Galilee; the centre, Samaria; the south, Judea. This is the Land of Canaan which was bestowed on Abraham; the covenanted home of his descendants." (*Bibl. Dict.*) Dean Stanley, however, makes it to be larger than this. "The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea, is rarely more than 50 miles. Its length, from Dan to Beersheba, is about 180 miles." But, whatever may be its measurements, the glory of this land consists in its having been the theatre of the most marvellous and momentous events in the history of the world, and is in inverse ratio to its size. (c)

III. The position of this land was secure.

An examination of its boundaries as they are here laid down, shows that it was surrounded by natural fortifications. In one particular only was the position of this land perilous. "The only road by which the two great rivals of the ancient world could approach one another—by which alone Egypt could go to Assyria, and Assyria to

Egypt—lay along the broad flat strip of coast which formed the maritime portion of the Holy Land, and thence by the plain of the Lebanon to the Euphrates." This road was undoubtedly a dangerous one for the Israelites. And through this channel the destruction of the nation came at length. But, with this exception, this land was naturally surrounded by almost impregnable defences. (d)

IV. The soil of this land was fertile.

Its present condition is not to be regarded as a representation of its condition when it was inhabited and cultivated. At present the face of the country presents a rocky and barren aspect. For this there are two causes. "The first is the destruction of the timber in that long series of sieges and invasions which began with the invasion of Shishak (B.C. circa 970), and has not yet come to an end. This, by depriving the soil and the streams of shelter from the burning sun, at once made, as it invariably does, the climate more arid than before, and doubtless diminished the rainfall. The second is the decay of the terraces necessary to retain the soil on the steep slopes of the round hills. This decay is owing to the general unsettlement and insecurity which have been the lot of this poor little country almost ever since the Babylonian conquest. The terraces once gone, there was nothing to prevent the soil which they supported being washed away by the heavy rains of winter; and it is hopeless to look for a renewal of the wood, or for any real improvement in the general face of the country, until they have been first re-established." — *Grove*. Its condition in ancient times is thus portrayed by the inspired lawgiver: "A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains," &c. (Deut. viii. 7-9). "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt," &c. (Deut. xi. 10-12). (e)

V. The Israelites failed to take possession of the whole of this land assigned to them by God.

The territory here marked out for them greatly exceeded that which they actually conquered. For example, it appears that the north-western boundary was to reach "unto great Zidon" (Josh. xix. 28), but neither that city nor even Tyre, which is about 20 English miles further south, was ever acquired by Israel. Accho was "the northernmost city of the Holy Land on the western coast." In order to discover the difference between the extent of the territory allotted and that actually taken, in this district of the land, contrast Josh. xix. 24-31, and Judg. i. 31, 32. Other instances of the failure of the Israelites to take possession of the territory given to them by God are recounted in Judg. i. 27-36. From this failure arose many of the

sins and sufferings of their subsequent history. In this we have an illustration of the failure of the people of God in this day to rise to the height of their Christian calling, or to realise the fullness and wealth of their Christian privileges. The treasures of the Divine blessing immeasurably exceed our aspiration and faith, and consequently, our realization of them. Comp. *Psa. lxxxix. 13-16; Isa. xlviii. 17-19.*

In conclusion, the subject presents an impressive illustration of the great goodness of God to His people. And His goodness is even more manifest in the spiritual privileges and possessions to which He calls us in Jesus Christ. Let us show our appreciation of His goodness by striving to attain unto our high calling.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) On this point we have given illustrations on pp. 43, 70.

(b) The ambition and insatiable greediness of great men hath put all out of order, and nothing is so holy which can stay them creeping and encroaching upon the bounds and borders of their neighbours. Thus they break the law of God and nature, in seeking to enlarge and increase their own dominions. These justly incur the curse of the prophet, "Woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" (*Isa. v. 8; Hab. ii. 9-12; Jer. xxii. 23; Mic. ii. 2*). For wherefore hath God separated nation from nation, and one kingdom from another people, but that all should live quietly and communicate one with another, and that there might be no confusion or divisions? And, therefore, ought all to be contented with their own bounds. God hath made them great, but they always seek to make themselves greater: He hath set them bounds, but they will know no bounds. So, then, from thence we may gather that the wars which are taken in hand upon ambition, and the enlarging of the bounds of their empire only, are a despiting of God, a shedding of innocent blood, and a perverting of the order which He hath set in nature and nations. Every man, therefore, ought to abide in his own possession and inheritance, and not to trouble or molest one another. . .

This reproveth the greedy and covetous affections of private men that covet to be rich, they care not by what means. But as soon as the desire of getting gain is settled in them, they are inflamed to rake to them-

selves by hook or by crook. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live." Covetousness is a corrupt affection of the mind, greedily desiring, and too much gaping after, the riches of this life. They dream of long life, forgetting that no man's life consisteth in the abundance of his riches (*Luke xii. 15*). They think they shall exceedingly profit them, but by the just judgment of God they turn to their hurt. They think they will be as a shield or buckler to defend them from the injuries of this life, but they are turned into swords whereby they are wounded or destroyed. They have conceived a strong opinion that they will be as a wall on every side to underprop the house, but they prove as a double cannon to cast it down to the ground. As then, he that eateth moderately is nourished by the meat, and it abideth in the stomach, but when it is taken immoderately the stomach is choked, and it is vomited up again; so he that greedily heapeth up riches shall be constrained to "vomit them up again" (*Job xx. 15*). Covetousness, therefore, is a sin, when a man is discontented with the estate wherein God hath set him, and with those things that God hath given for the sustenance of this present life; when he murmureth against God, and the more he hath, the more he desireth; when he heapeth them up and keepeth them, and bringeth them not forth to any godly or necessary uses; but he distrusteth the Providence of God, and putteth his trust and confidence in his riches, as if he could not live without abundance of them, neither be sustained by the hand of God.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) In Palestine, as in Greece, every traveller

is struck with the smallness of the territory. He is surprised, even after all that he has heard, in passing, in one long day, from the capital of Judea to that of Samaria; or at seeing, within eight hours, three such spots as Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea is rarely more than fifty miles. Its length from Dan to Beersheba is about a hundred and fifty miles. The time is now gone by when the grandeur of a country is measured by its size, or the diminutive extent of an illustrious people can otherwise than enhance the magnitude of what they have done. The ancient taunt, however, and the facts which suggested it, may still illustrate the feeling which appears in their own records. The contrast between the littleness of Palestine, and the vast extent of the empires which hung upon its northern and southern skirts, is rarely absent from the mind of the Prophets and Psalmists. It helps them to exalt their sense of the favour of God towards their land, by magnifying their little hills and dry torrent beds into an equality with the giant hills of Lebanon and Hermon, and the sea-like rivers of Mesopotamia. It also fosters the consciousness that they were not always to be restrained within these earthly barriers, "The place is too strait for me; give me place where I may dwell" (Isa. xlix. 20). Nor is it only the smallness, but the narrowness, of the territory which is remarkable. From almost every high point in the country its whole breadth is visible, from the long wall of the Moab hills on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Whatever may be the poverty or insignificance of the landscape, it is at once relieved by a glimpse of either of these two boundaries.

"Two voices are there—one is of the sea,
One of the mountains,"—

and the close proximity of each—the deep purple shade of the one, and the glittering waters of the other—makes it always possible for one or other of those two voices to be heard now, as they were by the Psalmists of old—"The strength of the mountains is His also—The sea is His, and He made it."—*A. P. Stanley, D.D.*

(d) Look at its boundaries. The most important will be that on the east. For in that early time, when Palestine first fell to the lot of the chosen people, the East was still the world. The great empires which rose on the plains of Mesopotamia, the cities of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were literally then, what Babylon is metaphorically in the Apocalypse, the rulers and corrupters of all the kingdoms of the earth. Between these great empires and the people of Israel, two obstacles were interposed. The first was the eastern Desert, which formed a barrier in front even of the outposts of Israel—the nomadic tribes on the east of the Jordan; the second, the vast

fissure of the Jordan valley, which must always have acted as a deep trench within the exterior rampart of the Desert and the eastern hills of the Trans-Jordanic tribes.

Next to the Assyrian empire in strength and power, superior to it in arts and civilization, was Egypt. What was there on the southern boundary of Palestine, to secure that "the Egyptians whom they saw on the shores of the Red Sea, they should see no more again"? Up to the very frontier of their own land stretched that "great and terrible wilderness," which rolled like a sea between the valley of the Nile and the valley of the Jordan. This wilderness itself—the platform of the Tih—could be only reached on its eastern side by the tremendous pass of 'Akaba at the southern, of Sâfeh at the northern end of the 'Arabah, or of the no less formidable ascents from the shores of the Dead Sea.

On these, the two most important frontiers, the separation was most complete. The two accessible sides were the west and the north. But the west was only accessible by sea, and when Israel first settled in Palestine, the Mediterranean was not yet the thoroughfare—it was rather the boundary and the terror of the eastern nations. From the north-western coast, indeed, of Syria, the Phœnician cities sent forth their fleets. But they were the exception of the world, the discoverers, the first explorers of the unknown depths; and in their enterprises Israel never joined. In strong contrast, too, with the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, Palestine has no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, such as in ancient, even more than in modern times, were necessary for the invitation and protection of commercial enterprise. One long line, broken only by the bay of Acre, containing only three bad harbours, Joppa, Acre, and Caïpha—the last unknown in ancient times—is the insupportable front that Palestine opposed to the western world. On the northern frontier the ranges of Lebanon formed two not insignificant ramparts. But the gate between them was open, and through the long valley of Coele-Syria, the hosts of Syrian and Assyrian conquerors accordingly poured. These were the natural fortifications of that vineyard which was "hedged round about" with tower and trench, sea and desert, against the "beasts of the wood," and "the beasts of the field."—*Ibid.*

(e) There is this peculiarity which distinguishes Palestine from the only countries with which it could then be brought into comparison. Chaldea and Egypt—the latter of course in an eminent degree—depend on the course of single rivers. Without the Nile, and the utmost use of the waters of the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. But Palestine is well distinguished, not merely as "a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, of oil-olive and honey," but emphatically as "a good land, a land of brooks.

of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of plains and mountains,"—"not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowest thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but a land of mountains and plains which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." This mountainous character; this abundance of water both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in contradistinction to the one uniform supply of the great river; this abundance of "milk" from its "cattle on a thousand hills," of "honey" from its forests and its thymy shrubs, was absolutely peculiar to Palestine amongst the civilized nations of the East. Feeble as its brooks might be—though, doubtless, they were then more frequently filled than now—yet still it was the only country where an Eastern could have been familiar with the image of the Psalmist: "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the mountains." Those springs, too, however short-lived, are remarkable for their copiousness and beauty. Not only in the East, but hardly in the West, can any fountains and sources of streams be seen so clear, so full-grown even at their birth, as those of the Kishon, the Jordan, and the whole of the Jordan valley. Wales or Westmoreland are, doubtless, not regarded as fertile regions; and the green fields of England to those who have

come fresh from Palestine, seem, by way of contrast, to be indeed "a land of promise." But transplant Wales or Westmoreland into the heart of the Desert, and they would be far more to the inhabitants of the Desert than to their inhabitants are the richest spots of England. Far more: both because the contrast is in itself greater, and because the phenomena of a mountain country, with wells and springs, are of a kind almost unknown to the dwellers in the deserts or river-plains of the East.

Palestine therefore, not merely by its situation, but by its comparative fertility, might well be considered the prize of the Eastern world, the possession of which was the mark of God's peculiar favour; the spot for which the nations would contend: as on a smaller scale the Bedouin tribes for some "diamond of the desert," some "palm-grove islanded amid the waste." And a land of which the blessings were so evidently the gift of God, not as in Egypt of man's labour; which also, by reason of its narrow extent, was so constantly within reach and sight of the neighbouring Desert, was eminently calculated to raise the thoughts of the nation to the Supreme Giver of all these blessings, and to bind it by the dearest ties to the land which He had so manifestly favoured.—*Ibid.*

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 16-29.)

The two chief rules for the Distribution of the Land have already been noticed by us (see p. 502). We have here the names of the persons to whom this distribution was committed. Notice,—

I. The co-working of the Divine and the human in the distribution of the land.

1. *Here is the Divine agency.* "This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot" (verse 13); *i.e.*, the situation of the territory of each tribe, and probably of each family, was to be determined by lot. The use of the lot was regarded by most ancient peoples as an appeal to God, and the result was viewed as determined by Him. There are numerous instances of this in Jewish history (Lev. xvi. 8-10; Josh. vii. 14-18; Judg. i. 1-3; xx. 8-10; 1 Sam. x. 20, 21; xiv. 41, 42; 1 Chron. xxiv. 3-31). There is a striking and important example of its use in the very early

Christian Church (Acts i. 24-26). The estimate of it may be gathered from Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18. By its use on this occasion, the families of Israel would regard their respective inheritances as allotted to them by Jehovah.

2. *Here is human agency.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you." The situation of the inheritances having been determined by lot, the extent of the inheritance of each tribe was to be determined according to their respective numbers and needs, by the persons whose names are here recorded. In this, as in many other things, God calls man to work, and to work in harmony with Himself. This is the case in the cultivation of the earth, in working out our own salvation, in the conversion of sinners, &c. We are "workers together with him" (2 Cor. vi. 1). (a)

II. The wise arrangements for the

performance of man's duties in the division of the land.

It is worthy of notice that in the persons appointed to this work—

1. *Each class was represented.* On the commission were "Eleazar the priest," the head of the religious orders; "Joshua the son of Nun," the head of the military order; and "one prince of every tribe," representing the civilian order.

2. *Each tribe was represented,* with the exception of Reuben and Gad, which had received their inheritance on the east of the Jordan. This arrangement, by which each class and each tribe was represented on the commission, was calculated to inspire the confidence of the people as to the equitable division of the land, and to prevent dissatisfaction on the part of any tribe or class of the nation.

3. *Faithful services already rendered*

were recognised. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, had already served the nation well and bravely. Their employment on this commission may be viewed—(1) as an acknowledgment of the value of their former services; and (2) as a judicious use of persons of approved fidelity.

4. *Distinguished abilities were called into use.* Joshua and Caleb were not only faithful but remarkably able men. For wisdom and courage they would have been eminent amongst any people. Their abilities would be very valuable in the distribution of the land.

Learn; that in the arrangements for the services of God the highest wisdom should be embodied, and in carrying out those arrangements the most approved fidelity and the most conspicuous ability should be employed. The work of God demands our best efforts both of head and of heart. (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If men say, "You do not believe in conversion," I do. If they say, "You do not believe in conversion by Divine influences," I do. If they say, "But you act as though you were to produce it yourself," I reply, "Not any more than I produce flowers myself." I believe that God made the earth, I believe that He made the seed, I believe that He made the germ in the seed, I believe that He made the sun and the atmospheric conditions needful to the development of that germ, but I believe that I shall have no flowers without my interposition and skilful agency. I prepare the soil, I plant the seed, I remove the weeds from them and nourish them; and yet, after I have done that, I shall not have flowers by any power that is in me. Thou, O Sun! hast alone that secret alchemy, thou alone hast that involving power, by which blossoming can come after my skill ceases, and by which the flower shall reward my toil. And Thou, O Sun of Righteousness! hast alone the power to cause the seed to blossom out. For though man may plant the seed, and till the soil, the final form of development comes from the influence of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul. We work together. Man carries on his work, and God adds His influence; and the two are not in antagonism, but are coincident and co-operative. They are not in conflict, but concurrent. Some men are shocked when we say, "Such a man was converted by the minister." You may say that in an irreverent way, but you may say it so

as to be conformable to truth. I say, "I raised a harvest." A person listening to me says, "No, you did not; God raised it." I say, by way of explanation, "I went out and planted my fields, and brought my orchard into the right condition, and all this wealth of grain and fruit is the result of my painstaking;" and in a proper sense that does not imply conceit or pride, and that does not exclude the agency of nature or the Divine constitution of things. I did raise that harvest. We are accustomed to talk so, and without irreverence; and there is a sense in which I am instrumental in implanting correct views in a soul, and impressing right influences upon it, and it is not irreverent for me to say that I have converted men from the error of their ways.—H. W. Beecher.

(b) Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for Him, and conformable to His law. The dullest and dearest time we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes, and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our heart to God. How few morning sacrifices hath God from many persons and families! Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments without any thought of their Creator and Preserver, or any reflection upon His will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many reserve the dregs of their lives, their old age—to offer up their souls to God, so

they reserve the dregs of the days—their sleeping time—for the offering up their service to Him. How many grudge to spend their best time in serving the will of God, and reserve for Him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives.—the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon! Would

not any prince or governor judge a present, half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? A corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a King as God is, whose name is dreadful. Alas! God calls for our best, and we give Him our worst!—*Charnocke*.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter contains directions for the appointment of (1) cities for the Levites to dwell in; and (2) cities of refuge for the manslayer; and laws concerning wilful murder and unintentional homicide.

Verse 2. *Suburbs*. *Keil and Del.* “Pasturage or fields.”

Verse 3. *For their cattle, &c.* “More strictly, ‘for their large cattle, for their sheep and goats, and for all their beasts whatsoever they be.’—*Speaker’s Comm.*”

Verses 4, 5. The directions given in these verses as to the extent of the “suburbs” have much perplexed expositors. They seem to us to mean that the suburbs should extend 1,000 cubits, or nearly one-third of a mile, from the city wall in every direction (ver. 4), and that at their outward extremity they should present on every side a frontage of not less than 2,000 cubits in length (ver. 5).

Verse 6. *And to them ye shall add*. Margin: “And above them ye shall give.” Or, “and in addition to them,” &c.

Verse 8. *From them that have many ye shall give many*. From the large inheritance of Judah and Simeon, the Levites received nine cities; from that of Naphtali three, and four from each of the other tribes. On the east of Jordan they had ten, and in Canaan proper, thirty-eight.

Verse 11. *At unawares*. Margin: “Heb., by error.” Or, by accident.

Verse 12. *The avenger*. Heb. *Goël*, redeemer, kinsman, &c. *Stand before the congregation, &c.* Or, “before the assembly,” which consisted of the

elders of the city. Comp. verses 24, 25.

Verse 15. *Unawares*. By accident, or, unintentionally.

Verse 16. *Instrument of iron, i.e., a tool, e.g., hatchet, hammer, &c.*

Verse 17. *With throwing a stone*. Margin: “Heb., with a stone of the hand,” i.e., a large stone, which filled the hand.

Verse 18. *A hand weapon of wood*. Or, “a wooden instrument of the hand,” e.g., a club. “The suspicion would rest upon anyone who had used an instrument that endangered life, and therefore was not generally used in striking, that he had intended to take life away.”—*Knobel*.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. Deut. xix. 4, 5.

Verse 25. *He shall abide in it*. He was safe only within the walls of the city.

Unto the death of the high priest. “The atoning death of the Saviour casts its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The High Priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the Holy of Holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, pre-eminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high-priest pre-signified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease.”—*Speaker’s Comm.*

Verse 30. *The murderer shall be put to*

death. The cities of refuge were not instituted to screen the guilty from deserved punishment; but to secure a just sentence.

By the mouth of witnesses, &c. Comp. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15.

Verse 31. *Satisfaction.* Rather, redemption money, or ransom.

THE APPOINTMENT OF CITIES FOR THE RESIDENCE OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 1-8.)

The Divine provision for the maintenance of the priests and Levites has already engaged our attention twice (see pp. 84-86, and 339-342); and, in-

asmuch as most of the homiletical suggestions of this paragraph were noticed there, it is needless to point them out in this place.

REFUGE.

(Verse 6.)

"Among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, there shall be six cities for refuge."

Some types of Christ appeared for a brief season, and then vanished. The guiding cloud, the manna, ended on Jordan's banks. But here is a sign which lived through Canaan's history. It never failed until the Cross was reared.

The story of the ordinance is brief.

Sinner, this type displays your case. The slayer is your counterpart. There may be carnage of duties—talents—time—souls. No day passes in which this guilt is not incurred. As the man-slayer did not plot his deed, so sinners blindly commit these murders through ignorance and unwatched thought.

Take now the sinner awakened to a sense of this guilt. He is, as the slayer, rushing in terror from the kinsman's wrath. He knows himself to be pursued.

One kinsman only hunted the slayer. But many adversaries threaten the guilty soul. God's justice takes the lead. It has strong claims. Its wrongs are many. Its wrath is righteous. The law is in pursuit winged with vengeance. It demands pure, unblemished love, from the cradle to the grave, in every child of man. All who trans-

gress become its prey. And who transgresses not? This law must have its dues. It follows sternly. The truth of God, too, points an inexorable sword. It has decreed that every sinner must die. Can it be false? Satan moreover follows with huge strides. He claims the sinning soul as his. His hate is bitter.

These adversaries rush on apace. Who, undismayed, can hear their nearing footsteps? Do any cry, Whither shall we flee? Is there a Refuge? Yes. The sheltering cities represent our Refuge. A Refuge is prepared, full—complete—secure. It is Christ the Lord. Flee to Him. All in Him are everlastingly secure. "There is therefore now no condemnation," &c. (Rom. viii. 1).

Let faith now calmly gaze on this city, and mark its towers. Christ's person is the grand pillar of security. While Jesus lives, and lives the mighty God, this safety is complete. His finished work builds up the Refuge. The walls—the bulwarks of this city—are red with blood. There is inscribed above each gate, "Christ died." Justice draws near. It sees this mark; and asks no more. The law's stern curse falls harmless here. Christ receives its weight. Satan pursues up to these gates. But here he pauses. All within

these walls are purified and beautified. He must confess that they are no more his. Blessed be God for this sure Refuge!

Mark, too, this Refuge is at hand. In Israel the slayer had to flee oft-times along a tedious road. Our city stands beside us. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise," &c. (Rom. x. 6-8). The gates are close. Enter this hour.

Believer, you are within this Refuge. Set not one foot beyond the holy precincts. Abide in Christ. Would you be safe through life—in death—for

ever? Then cleave to Christ, as ivy to the tree, as limpet to the rock.

And when you realize your mercies and your safe retreat, can your heart fail to love—your lips to praise—your life to serve? Can you now see such multitudes exposed to wrath, and not allure them to your loved Refuge? Strive by every means to call them in. Above all, agonize in prayer, that God's all-conquering Spirit may fly speedily throughout earth's bounds, opening blind eyes to see their danger, exciting anxious hearts to rush to this only Refuge.—*H. Law, D.D.*

THE DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 9-34.)

"Human life," to use the words of Dean Milman, "in all rude and barbarous tribes, is of cheap account; blood is shed on the least provocation; open or secret assassination is a common occurrence. The Hebrew penal law enforced the highest respect for the life of man. Murder ranked with high treason (*i.e.*, idolatry, blasphemy), striking a father, adultery, and unnatural lust, as a capital crime: the law demanded blood for blood (Exodus xxi. 12; Lev. xxiv. 17, 21, 22). But it transferred the exaction of the penalty from private revenge, and committed it to the judicial authority. To effect this, it had to struggle with an inveterate though barbarous usage, which still prevails among the Arabian tribes. By a point of honour, as rigorous as that of modern duelling, the nearest of kin is bound to revenge the death of his relation: he is his Goël or blood avenger. He makes no enquiry; he allows no pause; whether the deceased has been slain on provocation, by accident, or of deliberate malice, death can only be atoned by the blood of the homicide. To mitigate the evils of an usage too firmly established to be rooted out, Moses appointed certain cities of refuge, conveniently situated. If the homicide could escape to one of these,

he was safe till a judicial investigation took place. If the crime was deliberate murder, he was surrendered to the Goël; if justifiable or accidental homicide, he was bound to reside within the sanctuary for a certain period; should he leave it and expose himself to the revenge of his pursuers, he did so at his own peril, and might be put to death."

The various provisions of this law afford an impressive illustration of the Divine regard for human life.

I. In the institution of the cities of refuge as a provision that the life of an innocent person should not be taken away.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (Verses 9-15, 22-25).

The adaptation of these cities for this purpose appears in—

1. *Their accessibility from all places.* "Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge." "And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7, 8). A reference to the map of Canaan will show that these cities were so situated that one of them could be reached in a few hours from any part of the country.

2. *Their accessibility to all persons.*

"These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither." God's regard is not simply for the life of the Israelite, but for the life of man as man.

II. In the laws by which the trial of the manslayer was to be conducted.

The Divine guardianship of human life is manifested in these laws at least in two respects:

1. *In the clear discrimination between intentional and unintentional manslaughter.* "If he smite him with an instrument," &c. (vers. 16-24).

2. *In the absolute necessity for the evidence of at least two witnesses before a man could be adjudged guilty of murder.* "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die" (ver. 30; comp. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15). One witness might be mistaken in his view of the case, or might be prejudiced against the homicide; hence the importance of the testimony of at least two witnesses in the trial of such cases.

III. In the punishment of the intentional manslayer.

"The murderer shall surely be put to death" (vers. 16, 17, 18, 21, 30). As an evidence of the regard of God for human life, this punishment has additional weight from two facts:—

1. *It could not be averted by any ransom.* "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death." The crime was too heinous to be expiated by anything less than life itself.

2. *It was insisted upon for the most solemn reason.* "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it

defileth the land," &c. (vers. 33, 34). The argument seems to be this: that the shedding of human blood defiled the land, that such defilement could be cleansed only by the blood of the murderer; that the Lord Himself dwelt in that land, and therefore it must be kept free from defilement; if murder were committed, the murderer must be put to death. To spare the life of the murderer was to insult Jehovah by defiling the land wherein He dwelt.

IV. In the punishment of the unintentional manslayer.

"The congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood," &c. (vers. 25-28). When it was proved on the trial that the manslayer was perfectly free from guilty designs, that he had slain another entirely by accident, even then he had to bear no light punishment. He must leave his estate and his worldly interests, his home and his family, and dwell in the city of refuge. His dwelling there closely resembled imprisonment; for if he left the city, and its divinely appointed suburbs, the Goël, if he should come upon him, was at liberty to put him to death. He must remain there throughout his life, or until the death of the high priest should bring him release.

What striking witness does all this bear to the sacredness of human life in the sight of God! (a)

Conclusion.

i. *Respect human life*—that of others, and your own also. (b)

ii. *Guard against anger*; for it leads to murder, and in the estimation of Heaven it is murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15).

iii. *Cultivate brotherly kindness and Christian charity.* Where these are, anger cannot come.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In the precepts delivered to the sons of Noah, and, therefore, through them, to all their descendants, that is, to all mankind, that against murder is thus delivered: "Whoso

sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). There is in this reason a manifest reference to the dignity put upon

human nature, by its being endowed with a rational and immortal spirit. The crime of murder is made to lie, therefore, not merely in the putting to death the animal part of man's nature, for this is merged in a higher consideration, which seems to be, the indignity done to the noblest of the works of God; and, particularly, the value of life to an immortal being, accountable in another state for the actions done in this, and which ought, for this very reason, to be specially guarded, since death introduces him into changeless and eternal relations, which were not to lie at the mercy of human passions. Such moralists as the writer above quoted (Dr. Whately), would restrain the essential characteristics of an act of murder to the "hurt done to a neighbour in depriving him of life," and the "insecurity" inflicted upon society; but in this ancient and universal law, it is made eminently to consist in contempt of the image of God in man, and its interference with man's immortal interests and relations as a deathless spirit; and, if so, then suicide bears upon it these deep and awful characteristics of murder. It is much more wisely said by Bishop Kidder, in his remarks upon this passage, that the reason given—"for in the image of God made He man"—is a further aggravation of the sin of murder. It is a great trespass upon God, as it destroys His likeness; and self-murder, upon this account, is forbidden as well as the killing of others.—*Richard Watson*.

But more than this. Man, the immortal, is man, the sinful, the guilty; and for this immortal, sinful, guilty creature, a Saviour has been provided; and it depends on his having, or not having, an interest in this Saviour, whether his never-ending existence is to be one of happiness or woe. And it is now, and here—in the present life and the present world, that this interest in the Saviour must be effected, this connection with Him formed. And it is here, and now, too, that a certain change of heart and character must be wrought, a change such as alone can fit for the only description of happiness that is at all to be found in the world, and the eternity beyond. How precarious, then, is life! Short, vain, passing as it is, a vapour, a shadow, a handbreadth, a dream! Yet, viewed in this, its relation to eternity, it acquires a worth which it is far beyond all the powers of human arithmetic to compute. And it becomes, in this view of it, the more solemnly important that, though brief even when most protracted, its limit, in each case, is every moment uncertain. For when the time is precarious on which any great event materially affecting our interests depends, and every moment may be that which is to determine for us the evil or the good, the preciousness of every moment is mightily, oppressively felt. With the sarcastic coolness of a scoffing scepticism, Mr. Hume asks: "Where is the crime of diverting

a few ounces of blood from their channel?" The question is based on the assumption of there being no hereafter; no deathless spirit lodged in the frame through which that blood circulates; no moral accountableness; no judgment to come. It is the language of a narrow-minded, heartless materialism. It is the language of an ethereal spirit endowed with divine capacities, and prostituting its Heaven-bestowed powers to disprove its own immortality; to rob itself of the highest elements of its dignity; to disfranchise itself of the noblest of its chartered privileges; to debase itself to a level with the "beasts that perish."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) On suicide, our modern moralists have added little to what is advanced by the ethical writers of Greece and Rome to prove its unlawfulness; for, though suicide was much practised in those ancient states, and sometimes commended, especially by the Stoics, it was occasionally condemned. "We men," says Plato, "are all by the appointment of God in a certain prison or custody, which we ought not to break out of or run away." So likewise Cicero: "God, the Supreme Governor of all things, forbids us to depart hence without His order. All pious men ought to have patience to continue in the body, as long as God shall please who sent us hither; and not force themselves out of the world before He calls for them, lest they be found deserters of the station appointed them by God."

Whatever weight may be due to the considerations urged by moralists against this crime—and every motive which may deter men from listening to the first temptation to so direful an act, is important—yet the guards of Christianity must be acknowledged to be of a more powerful kind. For the principles of our religion cannot be understood without our perceiving, that, of almost all other crimes, wilful suicide ought most to be dreaded. It is a sin against God's authority. He is "the God of our life"; in "His hand our breath is"; and we usurp His authority when we presume to dispose of it. As resulting from the pressure of mortifications of spirit, or the troubles of life, it becomes a sin, as arraigning His providential wisdom and goodness. It implies either an atheistic denial of God's government, or a rebellious opposition to His permissive acts or direct appointments; it cannot be committed, therefore, when the mind is sound, but in the absence of all the Christian virtues, of humility, self-denial, patience, and the fear and love of God, and only under the influence of pride, worldliness, forgetfulness of God, and contempt of Him. It hides from the mind the realities of a future judgment, or it defies them; and it is consummated by the character of unpardonableness, because it places the criminal at once beyond the reach of mercy.—*Richard Watson*.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 9-34.)

There are certain respects in which the analogy between the cities of refuge and the salvation offered to man in the Gospel does not hold good; *e.g.*—

i. *The cities of refuge afforded no lasting protection to the guilty.* By their means a fair trial was secured for the manslayer; but if he was found guilty of murder, he was given up to the Goël to be put to death. They were an abiding refuge for those only who had accidentally slain a fellow creature. But Christianity is a refuge for the guilty. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom," saith St. Paul, "I am chief." "This man receiveth sinners." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." The guiltiest soul that flies to Jesus Christ is inviolably secure.

ii. *The cities of refuge did not exempt even the unintentional manslayer from death, but simply postponed it.* They rescued him from the vengeance of the Goël; but they could not screen him from that death which "is appointed unto all men." But the spiritual death, which is the penalty of sin, Christianity abolishes for the believer by bestowing upon him a life which is immortal and blessed. In the city of refuge the unintentional manslayer obtained bodily security for a time; in Christ the guilty sinner obtains spiritual security and joy for ever.

There are other respects in which the analogy is not quite complete; but in three most conspicuous features it is both clear and striking.

I. A great peril.

Under this head there are three points of resemblance.

1. *A broken law.* The manslayer had broken the law which guards human life. "Thou shalt not kill." Every man has transgressed the holy law of God in some respects. "All have sinned," &c. (Rom. iii. 23). "If we say

that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," &c. (1 John i. 8, 10).

2. *The penalty of death.* "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." "The murderer shall surely be put to death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (a)

3. *The peril of the exaction of the penalty.* The Goël of the slain person allowed no time to elapse before setting forth to avenge the death on the manslayer; and if he overtook him before he gained the city of refuge, he put him to death. The manslayer was fleeing for his very life. And the dire penalties of sin follow hard upon the heels of the sinner. Conscience pursues him with its condemnations, and will not be silenced. Divine Justice follows him closely, crying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And the wrath of God, which burns with unquenchable fire against sin, speeds swiftly on the track of the guilty sinner. (b)

II. A gracious provision.

By Divine command six cities were appointed cities of refuge; to either of these the manslayer might flee, &c.

1. *The provision was of Divine appointment.* "Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan," &c. It was this fact, that they were appointed by God's command, that made these cities a secure refuge for the homicide;—not the strength of their gates or walls, not the authority of their governors, but the authority of Him who had instituted them for this purpose. Jesus Christ is the Refuge appointed by God for the sinner. "The redemption that

is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," &c. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, a Prince and a Saviour," &c. Hence, they who flee to Him are perfectly secure. (c)

2. *The provision was adequate to the need.* Six cities were appointed; and were quite sufficient for the entire country. In each there was ample room, &c. The provisions of Christianity for the salvation of the sinner are enough for all the needs of all men in all ages and all lands. "A great multitude which no man could number" have found a secure and blessed refuge in Jesus Christ; "and yet there is room."

3. *The provision was accessible from all places.* Three measures were adopted to secure this :—(1) The cities were suitably situated, "They appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7-9). Our Saviour is everywhere present. He is a Refuge always near. (2) The roads leading to these cities were kept in good condition. Moses "took care," says Dr. Jahn, "that roads leading to them in straight lines should be laid out in every direction, which were to be distinguished from other streets." (Comp. Deut. xix. 3.) And, according to the Talmudists, (3) where two or more roads met, posts were put up with the word מִקְּדָשׁ, REFUGE, clearly marked on them for the direction of the fugitive. All this may be viewed as illustrating the accessibility of Jesus Christ to the sinner. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?" &c. (Rom. x. 6-9).

4. *The provision was accessible to all persons.* "These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them;" &c. They were accessible to every person in the land. Jesus Christ "is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. iv. 10). "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish," &c. (John iii. 15-17). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference," &c. (Rom. x. 11-13). (d)

5. *The provision was exclusive.* No

other city, except the six appointed ones, had authority to shelter and protect the manslayer. For the sinner there is no refuge but Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. (Acts iv. 12).

III. The urgent obligation.

The cities of refuge were of no advantage to the manslayer unless he gained an entrance into one of them before the Goël overtook him. It was his highest interest and imperative duty to make his way to the nearest city of refuge. It is yet more the duty and interest of the sinner to hasten to the Lord Jesus as his refuge. This obligation is—

1. *Personal.* No one could escape to the city of refuge for the homicide; he must go himself, or be put to death. Salvation is a personal concern and duty. Repentance, faith, self-consecration, are things which no one can do for another. "Work out your own salvation," &c.

2. *Prompt.* The manslayer had to escape at once or to perish. To linger was to be lost. Salvation must be sought at once. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow," &c.

3. *Pressing.* The manslayer may not loiter on the way, or slacken his pace until he was safe within the city. The words which were addressed to Lot were applicable to him: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee," &c. (Gen. xix. 17). And the sinner must put forth earnest effort. Christ must be sought zealously and with all the heart. (Comp. Jer. xxix. 12, 13.) Salvation must be pursued diligently. "So run, that ye may obtain," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 24-27). "Fight the good fight of faith," &c. "Let us lay aside every weight," &c. "Give diligence to make your calling," &c.

4. *Persevering.* The homicide must press eagerly on until he entered the city. There was no safety for him if he stopped short of the end. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Hasten, then, O sinner! to the Refuge, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If then you have come short of the glory of God, you must be lost; it cannot be denied, nor disputed. *I tell to every man now present, that he is guilty of sinning against the Almighty*—that if there be no intervention of mercy so mighty and so majestic as to satisfy the demands of justice, to quench her fire, and sheathe her sword—if there be not mercy, free, boundless, omnipotent, and eternal, every human being will stand before the judgment bar of God to receive the sentence of his condemnation. He must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; and he must go down to those abodes of torment where there are agonies unspeakable and inconceivable; where the smoke of torment ascendeth up for ever and for ever. Go, my hearers, to the brink of eternity, contemplate in imagination the scenes of that horrible pit which the word of revelation has presented to your view—contemplate the worm that dieth not—contemplate the fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels—contemplate the blackness of darkness—contemplate the smoke of torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever! What was it that gave to that worm its fang but *sin*? What was it that gave to that fire its intensity but *sin*? What was it that gave to that blackness its shadows but *sin*? What was it that gave to that torment its woe but *sin*? The voice is from the abyss uttering one wild cry, "It was sin; *it was sin*; IT WAS SIN!" Man *would* sin, and therefore man *must* suffer. There is a rigid equity between the one and the other. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—*James Parsons.*

(b) No closer doth the shadow follow the body than the revenge of self-accusation follows sin. Walk eastward in the morning, the shadow starts behind thee; soon after it is upon thy left side; at noon it is under thy feet; lie down, it crouches under thee; towards even it leaps before thee. Thou canst not be rid of it while thou hast a body and the sunlight. No more can thy soul quit the conscience of evil. This is to thee instead of a hell of fiends, that shall ever be shaking firebrands at thee; ever torturing thee with affrights of more pains than thy nature can comprehend.—*Hall.*

(c) In Samoa, the manslayer, or the deliberate murderer, flies to the house of the chief of the village, or to the house of the chief of another village to which he is related by the father's or the mother's side. In nine cases

out of ten, he is perfectly safe if he only remains there. In such instances, the chief delights in the opportunity of showing his importance. In Samoa, a chief's house is literally his fortification, except in times of open rebellion and actual war.—*G. Turner, LL.D.*

(d) Our Lord is the Saviour of all men, for that He hath rendered all man *salvabiles*, capable of salvation; and *salvandos*, designed to salvation, for that He hath removed all obstacles peremptorily debarring men from access to salvation, and hath procured competent furtherances to their attainment of it. He hath performed whatever on His part is necessary or fit in order to salvation, antecedently to the acceptance and compliance with those reasonable conditions, which by God's wisdom are required toward the instating men into a full and immediate right to salvation, or to a complete and actual fruition thereof. He made the way to happiness plain and passable; levelling the insuperable cliffs, and filling up the chasms, and rectifying the obliquities, and smoothing the asperities thereof, as the prophet foretold; so that all men, who would, might conveniently walk therein. He set the doors of paradise wide open, so that who pleased might enter therein; all the bonds and restraints under which men lay, He so far loosed, that any man might be free, who would concur to his own liberty and enlargement. All the protection and encouragement which were needful toward obtaining salvation, He afforded and exhibited to every one that would embrace and make use of them. In respect to which performances He might be truly called a *Saviour*, although all men do not in effect become saved. For the estimation and denomination of performances are to be grounded upon their own nature and design, not upon events depending upon the contingent and arbitrary behaviour of men. As he that freely offers a rich boon is no less to be accounted a benefactor, and liberal, although his gift be refused, than if it were accepted; as he that opens the prison is to be styled a deliverer, although the captive will not go forth; as he that ministers an effectual remedy, although the patient will not use it, deserves the honour and thanks due to a physician; so is our Lord in regard to what He hath performed for men, and offered to them (being sufficient to prevent their misery and promote their happiness), to be thankfully acknowledged their Saviour, although not all men, yea although not one man, should receive the designed benefit.—*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*

THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AS LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS, AND AS
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

(Verses 9-15.)

The system of redemption as revealed in the Gospel is often exhibited to our notice as bearing decisive marks of Divine wisdom. It is styled "the wisdom of God"—"the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom . . . which none of the princes of this world knew." The Apostle thus intimates to us that the Gospel would bear the closest inspection in all its parts; that it was worthy of our admiration, as well as of our love; that our redemption was not to be effected either by blind *force*, or by blind *affection*; that it should be accomplished in such a manner as that no rights were to be compromised, no perfections outraged, no interests overlooked, but, on the contrary, that a perfect harmony and balance should be maintained between the apparently rival attributes of the Divine character, and the apparently rival interests of earth and Heaven. Thus God was to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; Mercy and Truth were to meet together; Christ crucified in humility and weakness was to present a most eminent illustration both of the wisdom and of the power of God; and thus the countless multitudes saved by grace should have reason to exclaim in time and eternity—Herein "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence!"

But while these remarks are readily admitted respecting the Christian dispensation, they might be extended with equal propriety to the Jewish dispensation also. While the Gospel claims our homage on account of the wisdom it displays, we are prepared to make a similar demand on behalf of the Law. Both are the product of the same Author; both are the offspring of the same covenant of mercy; both conduce to the same happy result; and, though the Gospel confessedly has "the glory that excelleth," yet the same authority

assures us that "that which is done away was glorious" also. There are two points of view expressly in which wisdom shines in the departed economy:—

First: *As its leading institutions were particularly adapted to the state of the Jews in the infancy of the Church.* Their ceremonial rites and observances were particularly suited to the climate in which they lived, to the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the evils to which they were exposed. Ignorant and uncultivated as they were during their four hundred years' bondage, they required a religion addressed to the senses, as well as to the intellect; and hence they have a visible glory, "a worldly sanctuary," animal sacrifices, symbolical institutions. Having recently been brought out of the midst of an idolatrous people, many of their regulations were intended to preserve them from a relapse into idolatry, and to keep constantly before them the worship of one God, and faith in a promised Messiah. And having to wander for forty years in the wilderness without fixed habitations, without regular communities, and without the arts and ornaments of life, some laws were enacted suited to their unsettled condition, and some preparatory to their establishment in the Promised Land. In many instances Moses adapted himself to the customs and usages which had prevailed among them from patriarchal times; in some, his institutions were altogether new; in all, there was a perpetual reference to their moral and religious interests—to encourage virtue, to diminish crime, to induce them to walk humbly with God.

Secondly: *As it was expressly calculated to point to the coming of Christ, and introduce the Gospel dispensation.* The Law was a shadow—a figure for the time then present—a schoolmaster

to bring them to Christ. Unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as unto us. Their history in the wilderness and their worship in the Temple alike prefigured the times of the Messiah. Their sacrifices pointed to Him; the "Rock that followed them" was a type of Him; the scapegoat, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, and the manna in the wilderness, prefigured the nature of His offices, the design of His death, or the spiritual blessings of His kingdom.

These observations apply with peculiar force to our present subject—the *Cities of Refuge*. As civil appointments, they were calculated to prevent much mischief and misery; as religious ordinances, they serve to illustrate Gospel blessings. We shall consider them—

I. As legislative enactments adapted to the habits and customs of an Eastern people in an early age of the world.

Two things require notice—

1. *The office of the avenger of blood and the evils consequent upon it.* This office probably had a very early origin: it may be a relic of the earliest state of civil society, for where there was no magistrate or public tribunal, murders would have been frequently perpetrated had there been no process of this kind among surviving relatives. Cain evidently was in dread of summary vengeance for his murder of Abel. (Comp. Gen. iv. 14.) Rebecca probably dreaded a similar retaliation in case Esau had murdered Jacob; for "why," says she, "should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" It has been common among the wandering Arabs from Ishmael's time to the present hour. It probably arose out of the original law,—“At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man,” &c. (Gen. ix. 5, 6).

It is evident that such a practice must give rise to many very serious evils. Besides that it fostered a spirit of relentless hatred and revenge, it was often accompanied with flagrant injustice and wrong. The Goël is governed only by his passions; and it may be

that the person he suspects is not the murderer; thus an innocent person suffers, and instead of avenging one murder he commits a second. One such deed never fails to give birth to another; and so ten murders have not unfrequently their origin in one. The families on both sides take part in the quarrel, and thus under the pious pretext of avenging innocent blood, two families may be in a state of constant warfare, and transmit feuds and enmities from father to son, even to the tenth generation. Thus the office of the avenger of blood, though proper in some states of society, was subject to many abuses, and required to be placed under strong restrictions. Moses could not have abolished it altogether, at least on a sudden, he therefore adopted regulations which neutralised the evil.

2. *The appointment of the cities of refuge, in order to secure the ends, both of mercy and of justice.* Six cities of refuge were appointed—three on the one side of Jordan, three on the other—to which the manslayer might immediately repair, and in which the individual might be safe, &c. . . . Thus provision was made both for justice and mercy—for justice if the fugitive were guilty, for mercy if he were innocent. And in order to give the innocent person every reasonable hope of escaping, the cities were placed at easy distances, to which persons might have access from any part of the land, the roads were straight and plain, &c. . . .

But even in the mercy that was shown an accidental manslayer, we see how sacred life was in God's esteem; for the fugitive must be a prisoner and an exile, apart from all his friends, till the death of the High Priest, perhaps for many years. This was intended to punish that imprudence which had cost another man his life, and could not fail to make the people cautious against the recurrence of such accidents; for as no compensation could be taken for the life of a murderer, so no sum could rescue an innocent manslayer from the city (vers. 31, 32).

II. As a religious ordinance designedly employed by the apostle to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God in the methods of our salvation.

Here we see clearly depicted the character and office of our great Redeemer. This Redeemer is our near Kinsman; for "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." To this the apostle alludes: "God sent forth His Son made of a woman," &c. (Gal. iv. 4, 5). This illustrates the sublime passage in the book of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. He is here compared to the Goël, &c. (Comp. Hos. xiii. 14; Zech. ix. 12.) The apostle says: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him," for which, like the manslayer, he would count all things loss. And he describes Christians as having "fled for refuge." "There is

therefore now no condemnation," &c.

1. *A state of exposure is implied.* Every man who reflects upon his past life, upon the holiness of God's law, upon the inflexibility of His government, and upon the sentence He has pronounced against sin, must be aware that he is in a state of jeopardy. The sentence has been promulgated from age to age with awful solemnity, "Cursed is every one," &c. If we carry the thought to its extent, it is Jehovah Himself who is the Avenger. His law we have broken, &c.

2. *A method of rescue has been provided.* Christ has undertaken our desperate cause. We are to flee for refuge. It is the only one. It is open to the Gentile as well as the Jew.

Samuel Thodey.

THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO FLEE TO THE CITY OF REFUGE.

(Verses 24-28.)

That the Mosaic law had a spiritual meaning, is placed beyond all doubt from the clear allusions of Scripture (Zech. ix. 12; Heb. vi. 18). Observe—

I. Our natural state is one of imminent danger.

We are all criminals, having, ignorantly and in unbelief, rebelled against the Almighty Sovereign. As criminals, we are justly exposed to the infliction of the threatened penalty of death (Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. vi. 23; Rev. xxi. 8). Truly, then, we may observe in the situation of the manslayer a great resemblance to that of our own, as pursued by the inexorable Justice of One whose wrath we have so much provoked (Rom. i. 18; John iii. 36).

II. Nothing can deliver us from this danger but a zealous and timely flight.

We may sit at ease, bless ourselves in our heart, and feel secure; but if death overtakes us loitering in our sins, we must perish in them; and it will be vain to trust to anything as our covenant and hope, so long as we re-

main under that indifference to our spiritual interests, which demonstrates us to be still unchanged (James ii. 10).

III. There is a place of safety to which we can flee.

Christ is our refuge:—

1. *A Refuge Divinely appointed.* God so pitied, so deeply and intensely compassionated our state, as to plan and provide a way of deliverance for us by His only begotten Son (John iii. 16).

2. *A Refuge free and open to all.* None are shut out from it, but those who, by their impenitence and obstinacy, shut out themselves. No stage, no state of guilt, can make any difference; but sinners of every rank and description, without limitation or reserve, have a place prepared in which they may find security (1 Cor. vi. 11).

3. *A Refuge everywhere near to resort to.* Christ is set before us in the Gospel, and to find Him we need neither climb up into heaven, nor descend into the bottom of the sea (Rom. x. 8).

4. *A Refuge easily accessible.* Every obstacle is effectually removed, God

being reconciled, His justice satisfied, and His law magnified; so that nothing need hinder our trusting in Christ, the great God, and our Saviour.

5. *A Refuge containing an ample supply for our wants and necessities.* For here are to be found wisdom, grace, life, liberty, peace, and joy.

IV. Having once entered this place we must abide there.

It was not enough that the man-slayer fled to the city of refuge. Having gained this place, he must remain

in it till the death of the high priest. Nor is it sufficient to have once believed in Christ. We must abide in Him, renouncing for ever all thoughts of going into any forbidden region (Isa. xxx. 15). And woe be unto us, if we dare to be found without (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Let us hence seek after a sight of our danger, abandon all means of relief not warranted in the Scripture, and resign ourselves up to Christ.—*William Sleight.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAW FOR THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSSES.

(Verses 1-12.)

Let us notice—

I. The case stated.

“And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir,” &c. (vers. 1-4). The daughters of Zelophehad were heiresses, according to the law stated in chapter xxvii. 1-11 (see pp. 509, 510). There was a probability of their marriage, and it might have been to persons of some of the other tribes. (a) And, as Matthew Henry points out, it is probable that the heads of the tribe of Manasseh knew, that “at this time, great court was made to them by some young gentlemen of other tribes, because they were heiresses, that they might get footing in this tribe, and so enlarge their own inheritance. This truly is often aimed at more than it should be in making marriages, not the meetness of the person, but the convenience of the estate, to ‘lay house to house and field to field.’ ‘Wisdom indeed is good with an inheritance;’ but what is an inheritance good for in that relation without wisdom? But here, we may presume, the personal merit of these daughters recommended them as well as their fortunes.” But if they married to persons of another tribe, their inheritance would pass away

from the tribe of Manasseh to the tribe or tribes to which their husbands belonged. It was in order to guard against this that the heads of the fathers’ houses of the family of Gilead the Manassite appealed unto Moses. In so doing they were actuated, not by selfish concern for their personal interests. Their respective inheritances would not be diminished by the marriage of these heiresses. But they urged that, if they married to persons of any of the other tribes,—(1) The Divine allotment of the land would be invaded. “They said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel,” &c. (2) The territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh would be diminished. “If they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes,” &c. (vers. 3, 4). In this way the wealth and importance and power of the half-tribe would be lessened.

These proceedings of the heads of this family were orderly, respectful, reasonable, and commendable.

II. The case adjudicated.

“And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord,” &c. (vers. 5-9).

1. *The righteousness of the case was*

acknowledged. "The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well." The conduct of the elders was commended, &c.

2. *The difficulty of the case was removed.*

The law by which the difficulty was removed comprised two simple clauses:—

(1) That the daughters of Zelophehad were not to be coerced in marriage. "This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best." "Now if God left them to their liking," asks Bishop Babington, "should men force their children against all love and liking? No, no, it is a sin, and not a small one, bitter to the child all the days of life, and not very sweet to the parents after they see the fruits of their violence. Let children dutifully regard parents, and parents charitably and religiously regard their children, who will beg with better will where they like than live without love in world's abundance. We have known too often the child cry, the father cry, and the mother die for this fault, when it was too late." (b)

(2) That the daughters of Zelophehad were to marry persons of their own tribe. "Only to the family of the tribe of their fathers shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance," &c. Thus, while the former provision secured to them freedom in their marriages, this provision, by restricting the extent of their

choice, secured their inheritance to the tribe of Manasseh.

3. *The decision in this case was made the law for all similar cases* "And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe," &c. (vers. 8, 9).

4. *The decision of this case was of Divine authority.* "Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, . . . This is the thing which the Lord doth command," &c. Hence the decision was binding both in the case which gave rise to it, and in all similar cases in subsequent times.

III. *The adjudication acted upon.*

"Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad," &c. (vers. 10-12). "They married their fathers' brothers' sons. By this it appears," says Matthew Henry,—

"1. *That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful*, nor within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But,

"2. *That ordinarily it is not advisable*; for, if there had not been a particular reason for it (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven), they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly will endeavour to walk surely."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Marriage has in it less of beauty, but more of safety, than the single life; it hath not more ease, but less danger; it is more merry and more sad; it is fuller of sorrows and fuller of joys; it lies under more burdens, but is supported by all the strengths of love and charity; and these burdens are delightful. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities and churches, and heaven itself. Celibacy, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined, and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and

promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world.—*Jeremy Taylor*.

(b) The marriage life is always an *insipid*, a *vexatious*, or a *happy* condition. The first is, when two people of no genius or taste for themselves meet together, upon such a settlement as has been thought reasonable by parents and conveyancers, from an exact valuation of the land and cash of both parties. In this case, the young lady's person is no more regarded than the house and improvements in purchase of an estate; but she goes with her fortune, rather than her fortune with her. These make up the crowd or vulgar of the rich, and fill up the lumber of the human race, without beneficence towards those below them, or respect towards those above them.

The *vezatious* life arises from a conjunction of two people of quick taste and resentment put together for reasons well known to their friends, in which especial care is taken to avoid (what they think the chief of evils) poverty, and insure to them riches, with every evil besides. These good people live in a constant constraint before company, and too great familiarity alone. When they are within observation, they fret at each other's carriage and behaviour; when alone, they revile each

other's person and conduct. In company, they are in purgatory; when only together, in a hell.

The *happy* marriage is where two persons meet and voluntarily make choice of each other, without principally regarding or neglecting the circumstances of fortune or beauty. These may still love in spite of adversity or sickness: the former we may, in some measure, defend ourselves from; the other is the portion of our very make.—*Sir R. Steele*.

MARRIAGE.

(Verse 6.)

We may notice briefly, by way of introduction,—

i. *That marriage is a Divine institution.* It was ordained by God (Gen. i. 26-28; ii. 18-24; 1 Cor. xi. 9). It was solemnly confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xix. 3-12), and by His Apostles (1 Cor. vii. 2; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

ii. *That the obligations involved in marriage are binding and sacred.* Marriage itself is not obligatory. There are circumstances in which celibacy is undoubtedly commendable (Matt. xix. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 8). But when the marriage relation has been entered into, obligations of the most tender and sacred character have been incurred. These obligations are not simply those imposed by the civil authority, but those which pertain to it as an ordinance of God: Divine in its origin, it is Divine also in its obligations (Gen. ii. 18, 24; Mal. ii. 14-16; Matt. xix. 4-6; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

But, to confine ourselves to the text, two observations are here warranted on marriage in general:—

I. *That persons should not be coerced in marriage.*

“This is the thing which the Lord doth command. . . . saying, Let them marry to whom they think best.” Here we have—

1. *Personal choice as opposed to compulsion.* Parents “who force their daughters into marriage,” said Lord Rochester, “are worse than the Ammonites, who sacrificed their children

to Moloch—the latter undergoing a speedy death; the former suffering years of torture, but too frequently leading to the same result.”

“For marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship;
For what is wedlock forced but a hell,
An age of discord and continual strife?
Whereas the contrary bringeth forth
happiness,
And is a pattern of celestial bliss.”

—*Shakespeare*.

Moreover, such coercion is a sad degradation of marriage; a grievous wrong to the persons coerced; and a heinous sin against God. But further, it seems to us that the text suggests that marriage should be entered into from—

2. *Personal affection as opposed to mere convenience.* In the clause now under consideration, it is the person, not the property, which is spoken of. “Let them marry to whom they think best.” Marriage is far too sacred a thing to be treated as a matter of mere convenience and arrangement. “I regard a man and a woman that come together in the marriage state as coming together in the most sacred of all possible conjunctions before God.” And to enter into this union without pure and strong affection, is an injury to the person married, and, as we said of marriage by coercion, a degradation of marriage itself, and a sin against God. (a)

II. *That there are important considerations which should regulate the choice in respect to marriage.*

One such consideration is mentioned

in the text. The daughters of Zelophehad must marry whom they liked best; but they were not to marry any one of another tribe; for if they did so they would injure their own tribe by diminishing its Divinely allotted territory. "Only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry." The inference is a just one, that while persons are to be free in their marriage, they are not to be rash or thoughtless; they should not overlook either their own true interests or the interests of others. (b) In the marriage choice, due weight should be given to considerations—

1. *As to property.* By this we do not mean that in marriage, money or other possessions should be a primary consideration, or that persons should not marry until they are in "well-to-do" or easy circumstances. (c) But in marriage persons should pay due attention to the temporal interests of themselves and their families. No one is at liberty to injure by his marriage the interests of his family or of others. On this point the teaching of our text is indisputable.

2. *As to consanguinity.* In the Bible marriage is prohibited between "any that are near of kin" (Lev. xviii. 1-18), with the exception of first cousins; and marriage between them as a rule is not desirable. (d)

3. *As to health.* Persons having within them the seeds of hereditary disease, should think long and deeply and unselfishly before they determine to enter the marriage state. It is an

awful thing for any one to transmit disease to the next generation in his own children.

4. *As to suitability.* This applies to age, to tastes, to tempers, to station, to pursuits. In innumerable instances where there has been no open disagreement, no bitterness or strife, lives have been impoverished, disappointed, and beclouded by unsuitable marriages. (e)

5. *As to character.* The rule for Christians is expressly laid down by St. Paul: "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39). And expositors, both ancient and modern, are almost universally agreed that the expression "only in the Lord," means, "within the limits of Christian connexion. . . . let her marry a Christian" (*Alford*). And Barnes: "That is, only to one who is a Christian; with a proper sense of her obligations to Christ, and so as to promote His glory." Many and weighty reasons may be adduced to enforce this. We mention only two—(1) In marriages in which this rule is violated, the deepest and holiest aspects of the relationship are unrealised; because in such unions there can be no mutual sympathy on those subjects which are most important and most precious to the heart of the Christian. (2) Such unions involve the most serious peril to the Christian character. (f)

Consider well the ancient inquiry, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And let Christians "marry to whom they will; only in the Lord."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) How thoroughly unprincipled are frequently the inducements to this connexion. I denounce every marriage as unprincipled that is not based on mutual esteem and love—every marriage that is not a *bona-fide* union of hearts. When such a connection is entered into for the sake of external symmetry and beauty merely, the selection being made solely by the eye, which sees no more, and looks for no more, than the well-proportioned form or "the blooming tincture of the skin," without regard to the qualities of the mind and heart,

"the spirit of the union" is, in such cases, a false fire, without the hallowed purity and warmth of genuine heart love: and it is many a chance to one that it speedily cools down even to extinction, leaving only the cold, heartless, lifeless form, without a spark of the living and glowing fire—the spirit, the soul, of connubial love and joy. What, indeed, could be left remaining of that which never had any real existence? And money! money! money! what shall I say of that vilest of degradations and abuses, by which the most sacred, inti-

mate, tender, and indissoluble of earth's relations, one which ought to be cemented and secured by the very finest and most delicate sensibilities and most inviolably honourable sentiments and feelings of the heart, is reduced to a base and sordid summing up of cash columns and bank interest, or a problem in land measuring and farm stock. "The love of money" (not money, observe, but the love of money) is said, by the highest authority, to be "the root of all evil"; and of the many evils that have sprung from this productive root, the one I am now noticing is assuredly none of the least. A money marriage is a marriage in form only; recognised indeed in human courts, but hardly owned as legitimate in the court of heaven. It is a mere mercantile bargain, a trading co-partnery, a union of purses (and hardly even that, for purses are kept with great jealousy where money is the object, and that object is to get a purse rather than to give one—the eager and covetous aspirant having often none to give), and not at all a union of affections. Now, if men and women will be thus unprincipled, as well as foolish, in forming the connection, is it wonderful that they should find but little happiness in it? Would not the greater wonder be that they found any at all?—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) With what hasty, light, foolish consideration do men and women jump at random into a connection that is to last for life, and of necessity most intimately and most unceasingly to affect the happiness of all their future days. How often is this done as if it were a mere holiday frolic, which could be broken off at will, as soon as they get tired of it! They hope they are to be happy. They have no doubt of it. But the reason of their having no doubt is their never having bestowed a single reflection on the grounds that exist for the hope. Had they done so, they might have found them much more scanty than those for fear. But it is a wedding, and that is enough. They have got married. The charm is in the word. As to congeniality of sentiment, and feeling, and desires, and habits, and pursuits, with all else that comes amongst the likelihoods of social harmony and happiness, such things have never entered into the calculation. Indeed there has been nothing of calculation or forethought in the matter. And is it to be wondered at, then, that they who thus wed in haste should repent at leisure?—*Ibid.*

(c) I do not believe any man was ever happier than when, having married early (and early marriages are usually virtuous marriages), and married for love, he and his companion went down into life together, and every day was a day of engineering to fit their means to their necessities, in their single slenderly furnished room, where they conferred together how to put scrap with scrap, and eke out pittance with pittance, and everything was calculated by pennies. How often, in later life, when people become rich, do the husband

and wife look at each other and say, "After all, my dear, we never shall be happier than when we first started out together." Thank God, a man does not need to be very rich to be very happy, only so that he has a treasure in himself. A loving heart, a genuine sympathy, a pure, unadulterated taste, a life that is not scorched by dissipation or wasted by untimely hours, a good sound body, and a clear conscience—these things ought to make a man happy.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) The use of such expressions (as, "near of kin," Heb. "flesh of his flesh," Lev. xviii. 6), undoubtedly contains an appeal to the *horror naturalis*, or that repugnance with which man instinctively shrinks from matrimonial union with one with whom he is connected by the closest ties both of blood and of family affection. On this subject we need say no more than that there is a difference in kind between the affection that binds the members of a family together, and that which lies at the bottom of the matrimonial bond, and that the amalgamation of these affections cannot take place without a serious shock to one or the other of the two; hence the desirability of drawing a distinct line between the provinces of each, by stating definitely where the matrimonial affection may legitimately take root.—*W. L. Bevan, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(e) In this great whirligig of the world, there is nothing stranger than the mating and mismating of men and women. There is no question that is more insoluble, and more often asked, than this, "What on earth ever tempted that woman to marry that man?" You cannot answer it, I cannot, and she cannot. There is but one other question like it, and that is, "What on earth tempted that man to marry such a woman?" He cannot tell, and she cannot, and nobody can. So it is, and so it will be, all the time, here and there, and everywhere. And, while there are some who, disappointed, rebound and break away into immoralities, or into an indifference which is an immorality in the realm of love, there are others of a greater soul, who give their whole life to fidelities in their relation. They know that they do not love. They know that there is that in them which is capable of development, but which they have never known. There are prophecies in themselves, which they do not want to awaken, of what their soul is capable of. If they read a book where the heroism of love is described, they shut the book, and tears flow from their eyes, and they say, "Oh! what might have been." But this is not safe, and they banish it, and go on in the usual way. Early and late they are faithful.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) I need not say that much of the happiness of human life depends upon the marriage unions which are formed. It is one thing to view the subject of marriage in the light of passion or convenience, and another to regard it as an institution by which human life may be developed and trained to the highest uses

and enjoyments. I do not hesitate to lay down the broad principle that where there is incongruity of religious conviction between man and woman, happiness of the deepest and purest kind is entirely out of the question. This principle is impartial in its application, having equal reference to the woman as to the man, and to the man as to the woman. Take the case of a young woman who has deep religious convictions and sympathies: she has been trained under religious influences, her habits have been identified with the sanctuary from very early life: she has taught in the school, she has served in connection with many agencies of the Church, and altogether her name has become honourably associated with benevolent operations; she is sought in marriage by a young man who has no religious convictions or sympathies, who, in fact, is worldly-minded, grovelling, earthly; he may, indeed, be a man of education, literary refinement, of good social position, of captivating address; nay, more—I will go further, and say, he may be a man against whom society is unable justly to point the finger of reproach. Wherever he is known he is respected for many social excellencies. Viewed in a worldly sense, the young man may be pronounced an eligible candidate for the lady's hand, yet, in the presence of such conditions, I have dis-

tinctly to give it as my opinion that happiness of the highest kind is impossible in such a connection. There must, on the woman's part, be more or less of sacrifice of the convictions and sympathies which have distinguished her whole life. Her religious emphasis will be modified; more or less of a chill will subdue her Christian zeal; her works of benevolence will be in some degree impaired; there may not be any great outward difference in her manner, but her soul must have felt the desolation of an impoverishing influence.

We know the ordinary excuse that is made when the Christian marries one who has no devotional sympathies: the generous, hopeful, self-sacrificing woman openly avows her belief that in a very little time she will be able to bring her intended husband to a right decision; she knows (poor creature!) that there is something good in him; she has heard (O mocking ear!) him say words which she construed into a noble intention on his part; she is sure all will be right by and by; a little patience, a little humouring, and a little instruction—then all will be right! This is the dream of her love, the inspiration of her ill-directed hope. Don't account me cruel when I denounce it as an imposition—a deceit—a lie.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

MAN'S NEED OF MORAL DIRECTIONS, AND GOD'S COMMUNICATIONS TO MAN.

(Verse 13.)

This verse refers to all the laws which were given in the plains of Moab (chap. xxv.—xxxvi.), and concludes the record of that legislation in the same way as the record of the legislation at Sinai was concluded (Lev. xxvi. 46; xxvii. 34). The text suggests—

I. Man's need of moral direction.

It is here implied that man requires "commandments and judgments" from the Lord. He needs moral guidance.

1. *Conscience is not a reliable guide.* Conscience has been deteriorated by sin. It sometimes slumbers, as in the case of David after his great crimes (2 Sam. xii. 1-6). It sometimes leads astray, as in the case of Saul the persecutor (Acts xxvi. 9). "It is a safe guide only when it is directed by the commandment of the Lord." (a)

2. *The light of nature is not an adequate and reliable guide.* It seems to us that many persons ascribe to the

light of nature what unassisted human reason would never have discovered, had it not been previously revealed in the Scriptures. (b)

But taking "natural religion to signify that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties, without higher assistance," we pronounce it an inadequate moral and spiritual guide for man. There are great obligations which the light of nature does not reveal; e.g., that of worship to God, and that of universal benevolence to man. Human nature has deep cravings to which natural religion offers no response. We cry out for forgiveness of sin; but natural religion can afford no satisfaction to our anxious hearts. Over the graves of our beloved dead we ask earnestly and importunately, "If a man die shall he live again?" but nature is silent as those graves. The

state of religious knowledge amongst even the most distinguished minds, who had not been blessed with a spiritual and Divine revelation, affords conclusive evidence of the inadequacy of natural religion for man's moral and spiritual guidance. (c)

II. Man's need of special direction when entering upon new enterprises and experiences.

The commandments and judgments referred to in the text were given to "the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho." They were about to set forward to take possession of the Promised Land; and these commandments and judgments were for their guidance and control in the novel scenes and engagements to which they were advancing. And as we go forward into untrodden ways and new undertakings, we need directions from Heaven. We may obtain such directions by studying the revealed will of God; by seeking for them at the throne of grace; and by carefully

observing the indications of Divine providence. (d)

III. God's communications to man.

The Lord met Israel's need of guidance and control by His gracious communications.

Notice—

1. *Their nature.* "Commandments and judgments." This implies His supreme authority. He has a right to command men. This right rests upon,—(1) His relations to man. He is our creator, &c. (e) (2) His personal character. He is infinitely righteous and wise and kind. He is supreme in authority because He is supreme in excellence.

2. *Their method.* "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses." He makes known His will to man through man. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since God has graciously revealed His will for our guidance, it is both our obligation and advantage to follow it fully and at all times.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible. What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the Fall, and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old desolate ruin, thrown from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and covered by tall rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blaspheme; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God! and as if fiends had taken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes, as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the "Book of Martyrs," read the sufferings of our own forefathers, and under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake.

With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest; and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one only sure and safe directory.—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(b) When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see we see with our own eyes,

we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others who showed it to us, and first made us see it, as if we were not at all beholden to them for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into. For knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favourable enough to our own faculties to conclude that they, of their own strength, would have attained those discoveries without any foreign assistance; and that we know those truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom we received them by theirs; only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one as his private possession as soon as he, profiting by other's discoveries, has got it into his own mind; and so it is; but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered; but their pains were of another sort who first brought those truths to light which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far in such a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour, little considering how much he owes to their pains who cleared the wood, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable, without which he might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles, and are now grown familiar and, as it were, natural to us, under the Gospel, we take for unquestionable, obvious truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them had Revelation been silent. And many others are beholden to Revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to Revelation that reason gives its suffrage, too, to the truths Revelation has discovered; but it is our mistake to think that, because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.—*John Locke*.

(c) They who speak of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of morals and religion, owe all their best views to that fountain of inspiration from which they so criminally turn aside. For how otherwise is it, that those fundamental principles in morals and religion which modern philosophers have exhibited as

demonstrable by the unassisted powers of the human mind, were either held doubtfully, or connected with some manifest absurdity, or utterly denied, by the wisest moral teachers among the Gentiles, who lived before the Christian revelation was given? They had the same works of God to behold, and the same course of providence to reason from; to neither of which were they inattentive. They had intellectual endowments, which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages; and their reason was rendered acute and discriminative by the discipline of mathematical and dialectic science. They had everything which the moderns have, except the Bible; and yet on points which have been generally settled, among the moral philosophers of our own age, as fundamental to natural religion, they have no just views, and no settled conviction. "The various apprehensions of wise men," says Cicero, "will justify the doubtings and demurs of sceptics; and it will then be sufficient to blame them when others agree, or any one has found out the truth. We say not, that nothing is true; but that some false things are annexed to all that is true, and that with so much likeness, that there is no certain note of judging what is true, or assenting to it. We deny not that something may be true; but we deny that it can be perceived so to be; for what have we certain concerning good and evil? Nor for this are we to be blamed, but nature, which has hidden the truth in the deep."

On this subject Dr. Samuel Clark, though so great an advocate of natural religion, concedes that, "of the philosophers, some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of a God; some by ascribing all things to chance, others to absolute fatality, equally subverted all true notions of religion, and made the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, needless and impossible. Some professed open immorality; others, by subtle distinction, patronised particular vices. The better sort of them, who were most celebrated, discoursed with the greatest reason, yet with much uncertainty and doubtfulness, concerning things of the highest importance,—the providence of God in governing the world; the immortality of the soul; and a future judgment."—*Richard Watson*.

(d) For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 152-154, 164.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 38, 39.

LIST OF SUBJECTS.

	PAGE
AARON and his sons : Parents and children	45
i. An incidental illustration of the exalted personal character and Divine mission of Moses	45
ii. An intimation that the duties of the ministers of religion demand for their faithful discharge their entire consecration thereto	45
iii. An example of wicked sons descending from a godly parent	45
iv. An example of the widest difference of character and destiny in children of the same parents	46
Aaron's rod, an illustration of the true Christian ministry (See MINISTRY)	327
Aaron staying the plague	323
i. The willingness of Aaron to intercede	323
ii. The nature of Aaron's intercession	323
iii. The success of Aaron's intercession	323
Aaron, the death of (See DEATH)	378
Aaron, the Divine plan for vindicating the high priesthood of, and its moral teaching (See VINDICATING)	325
Access to God, man's, and God's word to man	124
Acknowledgment of an extraordinary favour, a noble (See FAVOUR)	545
Affliction : its trials and consolations	503
Aggravated rebellion of the people, the, &c. (See REBELLION)	316
Aims at perfection	274
Alarm, needless	421
i. this alarm was great	421
ii. seemed to be justified	421
iii. led to the formation of an alliance against Israel	421
iv. was needless	422
Altar, the covering of the, and its teachings (See COVERING)	314
Altar, the offerings for dedicating the, and their moral suggestions (See OFFERINGS)	114
Amalek, Israel and	588
i. the Christian's example	588
ii. the Christian's encouragement	588
iii. the Christian's prospect	588
Ambition faithfully rebuked, wicked	293
i. the greatness of the privileges conferred upon the Levites	293
ii. the unrighteousness of the ambition cherished by them	294

	PAGE
iii. the heinousness of the rebellion in which they engaged	294
Answer of God to the appeals of men, the	196
i. His answer to the appeal of His much-tried servant	196
ii. His answer to the appeal of His perverse people	197
1. Recognises the sinful character of their appeal	197
2. Demands preparation for the granting of their appeal	19
3. Promises the abundant bestowment of that which they had so sinfully desired	197
Answer of the Lord to the intercession of Moses, the	257
i. Pardon in answer to prayer	257
ii. Punishment for aggravated sins	257
iii. Reward for eminent service	258
iv. Judgment for cowardice	258
Antidote, a deadly plague and a Divine (See PLAGUE)	394
Antidote, the unbelief of good men and its Divine (See UNBELIEF)	199
Apology, Balak's anger and Balaam's (See BALAK)	473
Apostasy	434
i. Balaam apostatized through worldliness	435
ii. progressively	435
iii. despite the greatest obstacles	435
iv. His apostasy was not only sad but fatal	435
Appeals of men, the answer of God to the (See ANSWER)	196
Application of an ancient incident, the modern	217
i. The possession of the greatest gifts does not exempt men from the liability to meanness and sin	217
ii. The most eminent servants of God are not exempt from the reproaches of men	217
iii. Our greatest trials sometimes arise from most unlikely quarters	218
iv. The Lord takes cognisance of the reproaches which are cast upon His servants	218
v. The servants of the Lord do well in bearing patiently the reproaches which are cast upon them	218

	PAGE		PAGE
Army of Israel, the first, an illustration of the Church militant	17	ii. The needless fear of the Moabites.....	429
i. The necessity of this army	17	iii. A word or two about Balaam	429
ii. The authority for organising it	17	Balaam and his prophecies, history of—	
iii. The composition of it	18	No. II	430
iv. The conquering spirit of it	18	i. The first false step Balaam took	431
Arrangements for carrying out the proposal of the Reubenites and Gadites	560	ii. The warning Balaam received	431
i. The arrangements of Moses for carrying out the agreement into which he had entered with the Reubenites and Gadites	560	iii. The refusal God gave to him	431
ii. The renewal of their promise	561	Balaam, history of, No. III.	443
iii. The inheritance of the half-tribe of Manasseh	561	Balaam, the counsel of	543
iv. The alteration of the names of places	561	Balaam, the sacrifice of Balak and (See SACRIFICE)	446
Aspects of honour (See HONOUR)	30	Balaam's ass	440
Aspects of human pilgrimage (See PILGRIMAGE)	164	i. The historic character of the miracle	440
Aspects of the Christian Ministry (See MINISTRY)	63	ii. The miracle itself	440
Atonement, the great day of; its moral suggestions (See DAY)	526	iii. The object of the miracle	440
Audacity in wickedness	297	Balaam's declaration of Israel's security (See SECURITY)	465
i. Defiance of the authority of the ruler appointed by God	297	Balaam's final parables : national revolutions (See REVOLUTIONS)	480
ii. Reviling the ruler appointed by God	297	Balaam's first parable : the blessedness of the people of God (See BLESSEDNESS)	448
iii. The solemn appeal to God which this conduct called forth from the ruler which He had appointed	298	Balaam's fourth parable : the Star and Sceptre of Israel (See STAR)	476
BALAAM and Balak, the meeting of (See MEETING)	441	Balaam's second parable : the constituents and the irreversibility of the blessedness of Israel (See CONSTITUENTS)	458
Balaam and Balak, the parting of (See PARTING)	484	Balaam's third parable : the glory of the people of God (See GLORY)	469
Balaam and his ass; Divine checks on man's downward course (See CHECKS)	436	Balak's anger and Balaam's apology	473
Balaam and his ass; a lesson on obstructive providences	439	i. The anger of Balak	473
i. The lessons it taught Balaam	439	ii. The apology of Balaam	473
ii. Lessons to us.....	440	iii. The lessons to be deduced.....	474
Balaam, Balak's first application to: man and the supernatural.....	423	Battle between Amalek and Israel, the	585
i. Men seeking supernatural help	423	An illustration—	
ii. Man conscious of supernatural powers and of subjection to Divine authority in the use of them	424	i. of the means and methods by which God effects His purposes	585
iii. Man receiving a supernatural visitation	424	ii. of the work and warfare of the good man;	586
iv. Man dealing unfaithfully with a Divine communication	425	iii. of the work and warfare of the Church	587
v. Men dealing unfaithfully as messengers	425	Battle of Edrei, the, an illustration of the Christian conflict (See CONFLICT)	415
Balaam, Balak's second application to: the decrease of resistance to evil	432	Benefit of reverses, the (See REVERSES)	392
i. The repetition of the request of Balak to Balaam	432	Bereavement, the sorrows of	385
ii. The repetition of guilty delay by Balaam	432	i. A great and good man had been removed;	385
iii. The repetition of the Divine visit to Balaam	433	ii. while toiling for their welfare;	385
iv. The setting out of Balaam.....	433	iii. when apparently his services could hardly be spared.	385
Balaam and his prophecies, history of—		iv. In his removal many had parted from a true friend	386
No. I.	429	Blessedness of the people of God, the; Balaam's first parable	448
i. How the career and fortunes of the Israelites were made known in those days	429	i. is beyond the power of their enemies	449
		ii. consists in separation from the ungodly	449
		iii. consists in their vast numbers	449
		iv. consists of righteousness of character	450
		v. is desired by the ungodly	450
		Blessedness of the people of God, the	472
		In proof of this appeal to—	
		i. the testimony of men of this world;	473
		ii. the nature of the blessings of religion;	473

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. the experience of good men ;	473	ii. confession of man's sin to God	522
iv. the design of Divine dispensations	473	iii. the thanksgiving of man to God ;	522
Blessing of God, the, and the acknowledg-		iv. the consecration of man to God ;	522
ment which it demands	466	v. goodness from man to his fellow-	
i. the Source of effectual blessing	466	man	523
ii. the time from which His interposi-		Census and its teachings, the	16
tion is remarked	466	i. God's personal interest in each	16
iii. the acknowledgment it demands	466	ii. His faithfulness to His word	16
Blessing, the preacher's ; or the happy		iii. His power to keep His word	17
new year	106	Certainty that sin will find us out, the	556
Blessing, the priestly	103	i. In what manner we have sinned	
i. The Divine direction	103	against the Lord	556
ii. The Divine benediction	103	ii. What assurance we have that our	
1. its significant form	103	sin will find us out	556
2. its Divine fulness	104	Checks on man's downward course, Di-	
iii. The Divine ratification	105	vine ; Balaam and his ass	436
Budded rod, a type of Christ, the	331	These checks are—	
Budding of Aaron's rod, the	330	i. sometimes in operation when un-	
Burdens of leadership, the (See LEAD-		perceived by man ;	436
ERSHIP)	191	ii. numerous ;	436
Burdens of life, the	68	iii. of various kinds ;	436
i. distributed to all men	68	iv. graduated in force ;	437
ii. distributed variously	69	v. limited in their effects	437
iii. distributed Divinely	69	Cherubim and the mercy-seat, the	125
iv. patiently borne	69	i. The relation betwixt law and grace	125
CALAMITY and an earnest prayer, a ter-		ii. The relation betwixt the dispensa-	
rible	399	tion of grace to man, and the	
i. A terrible calamity ; the just conse-		heavenly world	126
quence of sin	400	iii. The presence of God crowning the	
ii. An earnest prayer ; the result of		whole	126
sanctified affliction	400	Christ, the brazen serpent a type of Jesus	
iii. A mysterious appointment ; the		(See SERPENT)	401
result of Divine grace	400	Christ, the red heifer an analogue of the	
Caleb : A call to inquiry and courage	240	(See HEIFER)	354
i. The kingdom of heaven challenges		Christ, the rock at Kadesh an emblem of	
the inquiry of all men	240	(See ROCK)	370
ii. Different reports will be brought by		Christ the star spoken of by Balaam	479
the inquirers	240	i. The introduction to the prophecy	479
Caleb : the man for the times	260	ii. The prophecy itself	479
i. His faithful following of his God	260	Christ's death a proof of His Divinity	308
ii. His favoured portion	261	Church and its enemies, the	178
iii. His secret character	262	i. The Church has had enemies in	
Calf, the golden	590	every age	178
Calf, lessons from the worship of the	591	ii. The enemies of the Church are con-	
Camp, the	29	sidered the enemies of God	178
i. The tents	29	iii. When God rises up to judgment	
ii. The order	29	the destruction of His enemies is	
iii. The position	30	easy, terrible, and complete	178
iv. The standard	30	iv. The constant abode of God with	
Camp of Dan, the : aspects of Divine ser-		His Church is an object of their su-	
vice (See SERVICE)	40	preme desire	179
Camp of Ephraim, the, and its sugges-		Church militant, the first army of Israel	
tions	37	an illustration of the (See ARMY)	17
An illustration of—		Church of God, the golden candlestick,	
i. the Divine sovereignty ;	37	an emblem of the	128
ii. the sacredness of family ties	38	i. Its preciousness and sacredness	128
iii. the Divine regard for the weak	38	ii. Its light	129
Canaan, the ancient, a type of heaven	239	iii. Its ministers and their function	129
Canaanites, the expulsion of the (See		iv. Its function	129
EXPULSION)	596	Church, the stability of the, and the se-	
Candlestick, the golden, an emblem of		curity of believers	463
the Church of God (See CHURCH)	128	Church work and workers—the dedication	
Celebration of the goodness of God in		of the Levites	48
harvest, man's	522	i. The offices of the Church are institu-	
The goodness of God to man calls for—		ted by God	48
i. religious celebration from man ;	522	ii. There are different ranks in these	
		offices	48

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. The lowliest labour in the service of God is sacred and blessed	48	Communion with God in the mount, Moses's	592
iv. God appoints the persons to the various offices in His Church	49	i. The cause of the radiance on the face of Moses	592
v. Intrusion into sacred places and duties awakens the displeasure of the Lord	49	ii. The nature of the radiance.....	593
Cities for the residence of the Levites, the appointment of	607	iii. The conduct of Moses when he descended from the mount	593
Cities of refuge, the, an illustration of the salvation of Jesus Christ	611	Companionships, God's interest in man's (See INTEREST)	427
i. A great peril	611	Completeness of God's claims, the, and the dignity of His service (see CLAIMS)	59
ii. A gracious provision	612	Condescension of God, the, and the privileges of man	120
iii. An urgent obligation	612	i. The condescension of God	120
Cities of refuge, the, as legislative enactments and as religious institutions.....	614	1. The place in which He speaks	120
City of refuge, the security of those who have fled to the	616	2. The medium through which He speaks	120
i. Our natural state is one of eminent danger.....	616	3. The purpose for which He speaks	121
ii. Nothing can deliver us from this danger but a zealous and timely flight	616	ii. The privileges of man	121
iii. There is a place of safety to which we can flee	616	1. We may speak unto God, and	121
iv. Having once entered this place we must abide there	617	2. receive communications from Him	121
Claims of God, the supreme	342	iii. The consequent duty of man	122
i. illustrated;	342	Conflict, an illustration of the Christian, the battle of Edrei	415
ii. enforced	343	i. The Christian has to contend against a formidable adversary;	415
Claims, the completeness of God's, and the dignity of His service	59	ii. is inspired with the most encouraging assurance	415
i. The completeness of His claims	60	iii. shall obtain a complete victory	416
ii. The dignity of His service.....	61	Conflict the condition of attainment, and suffering the consequence of sin	554
Claims upon man's service, God's	50	i. A truth to be confirmed	554
i. Are incontestable	50	ii. A warning to be applied	555
ii. There is a correspondence between His gifts and claims	51	iii. An application to be made	555
iii. His arrangements are ever marked by infinite wisdom and kindness	51	Consecrated, sin in the, the involuntary defilement of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	95
Cloud tarrying, the,	155	Consecrated, the sacrifice of the, the offering of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	98
i. A word of description	155	Consecration of the Levites, the, aspects of acceptable consecration to God	131
ii. A word of exhortation	155	i. A practical recognition of the necessity of moral purity;.....	131
iii. A word of caution	156	ii. and of atonement for sin	132
"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good"	171	iii. Must be unreserved.....	132
i. God's privileges and gifts are never intended to be exclusive	172	iv. Must be open	132
ii. The invitation, "Come with us"	173	v. Is followed by religious service	133
1. To the house of God	173	Consecration to God, acceptable, the vow of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	90
2. To the word of truth	173	Consequences of sin, the mercy of God in relation to the	33
3. To the living Saviour	173	An example of—	
4. To our Father's home	173	i. the continuance of the consequences of sin;.....	34
Common-place, the distinguished rising out of the (See DISTINGUISHED)	499	ii. the exercise of the Divine mercy in mitigating the consequences of sin.....	34
Common-place, the interesting hidden in the	497	Constituents and the irreversibility of the blessedness of Israel, the, Balaam's second parable	458
i. The common-place	497	i. The constituents of this blessedness	458
ii. The interesting in the common-place	497	1. Their covenant relation with God	458
iii. The importance of the common-place	498	2. His presence with them	458
Communications to man, man's need of moral directions, and God's	622	3. His doings for them	458
i. Man's need of moral directions	622	4. The revelation of His will to them	458
ii. Man's need of special directions when entering upon new enterprises and experiences	623	5. The power He bestows upon them	458
iii. God's communications to man	623		

	PAGE
ii. The irreversibleness of this blessedness	459
1. It rests upon the unchangeableness of God.....	459
2. It is beyond the power of their enemies	459
Contentment and obedience	42
i. Contentment with the Divine appointment	42
ii. Obedience to the Divine commands	43
Co-operation of all in the service of God, the responsibility of each and the	58
i. God has a work for everyone to do, and He expects each one to do it	58
ii. He expects all to co-operate in His service	59
Counsel of Balaam, the	543
Covering of the Altar, the, and its teachings	314
i. How futile it is to oppose God	314
ii. God wishes one age to learn from another	315
iii. Sacred things must be treated reverently	315
iv. The sinner ever injures himself	315
Cry of the subdued rebels, the	331
i. Sinners are prone to pass from one extreme of evil to the opposite one.....	331
ii. Divine judgments may produce outward submission while the heart remains rebellious;	332
iii. and while the mind entertains most erroneous moral opinions	332
iv. The most stout-hearted rebels against God must submit to Him	332
Curiosity, Divine secrets and human (See SECRETS)	66
DAN, the camp of: aspects of Divine service (See SERVICE)	40
Day of Atonement, the great; its moral suggestions	526
i. It is our duty to set apart some time for serious reflection upon our sins.....	526
ii. Reflection upon our sins should lead to humiliation because of them	526
iii. Such humiliation should lead to the mortification of our carnal appetites	526
iv. True penitence leads to gratitude and personal consecration to God	527
v. Our penitence, at best, is imperfect, and needs the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice	527
vi. The sacrifices of the ceremonial law were unable to take away sin	527
Death, a proof of His Divinity, Christ's.....	308
Death of Aaron, the	378
i. The death of Aaron	378
1. As a consequence of sin	378
2. By the appointment of God	378
3. His introduction to life and to congenial society.....	379
ii. The appointment of Aaron's successor	379
1. A kindness to Aaron	379
2. A guarantee of the continuance of the Church	380

	PAGE
iii. The mourning because of Aaron's death	380
1. The worth of faithful ministers.....	380
2. The appreciation of blessings when they are withdrawn	380
Death of Miriam, the	363
i. Death terminates the most protracted life	363
ii. Death terminates the most eventful life	364
iii. Death terminates the most distinguished life	364
iv. Death, by reason of sin, sometimes terminates life earlier than it otherwise would have done	364
v. Death sometimes terminates life with suggestions of a life beyond	364
Death of the righteous, the	454
i. A character that we must define.....	454
ii. An event that we must illustrate	455
iii. A desire that must be regulated	455
Death, the crown of life	482
Declaration of judgment because of the rebellion of Israel, the Divine	250
i. The Divine view of Israel's sin	250
ii. The Divine judgment for Israel's sin	251
iii. The Divine regard for His covenant	251
Decrease of resistance, the: Balak's second application to Balaam (See BALAAM)	432
Dedicating the altar, the offerings for (See OFFERINGS)	114
Dedication of the Levites, the—Church work and workers (See CHURCH)	48
Defeat of the people that delight in war, the overthrow of the Amorites, or the (See OVERTHROW)	411
Defilement of the Nazarite; the involuntary, or sin in the consecrated (See NAZARITE)	95
Departure from the house of bondage, the	568
i. succeeded the observance of a significant and sacred memorial;	568
ii. was public and triumphant;	568
iii. took place when their oppressors were engaged in a mournful occupation;	568
iv. had been brought about by the most awful displays of Divine judgments	569
Desert, in the: an illustration of the life of the good in this world	7
i. The natural trials of the desert	7
ii. The Divine Presence in the desert	8
iii. The Divine uses of the desert	8
Determination of the route, the	569
i. The circumstances of the Israelites	570
ii. The dealing of God towards them	570
Diary of travels and its teachings, Moses's	567
i. God's continued presence and interest in human life	567
ii. God is the one true guide through life	567
iii. A picture of human life	567
iv. The greatest evils of life come from sin	567
v. Trusting in God and following Him we are sure to possess the promised inheritance	568
Die well, how to	456

	PAGE
Discouragements of pious men, on the	397
i. The discouragements of the way	397
ii. Considerations to remove the discouragements	398
Distinguished rising out of the common-place, the	499
i. Distinguished rebels ;	499
ii. profaners of sacred ordinances ;	499
iii. leaders and rulers ;	499
iv. heroes	500
Distribution of the Promised Land, rules for the.....	502
These illustrate—	
i. The sovereignty of God in bestowing His gifts	502
ii. The truth that in the arrangements of God provision is made for all His creatures	502
Distribution of the Promised Land, the arrangements for the.....	604
i. The co-working of the Divine and the human in the distribution	604
ii. The wise arrangements for the performance of man's duties	605
Distribution of the spoils of war, the	543
In this distribution—	
i. the claims of all classes were recognised ;	544
ii. the claims of each class were equitably dealt with ;	544
iii. the claims of the Lord were practically acknowledged.....	544
Dividing of the Red Sea, the	577
i. was miraculous ;	577
ii. the fact of the miracle is proved by the present existence of the nation which was that day born	578
Doom of the double-hearted, the.....	539
Balaam wanted—	
i. to serve two masters ;	540
ii. to earn two kinds of wages ;	540
iii. to do two opposite things at the same time ;	540
iv. two kinds of friendship ;	540
v. to have two religions.	540
Dough, the offering of the first of the (See OFFERING)	274
Duties, allotted	57
Dwelling with His people, God	80
i. God is present with His people	80
ii. God is present "in the midst" of His people	80
iii. God's presence in the midst of His people should exert a great and blessed influence upon them.....	80
EARTH filled with the glory of the Lord, the (See GLORY)	259
Elim : the Christian Life (See LIFE)	582
Enterprise and its disastrous termination, a presumptuous	267
Envy	206
i. is sadly common ;	206
ii. extremely foolish ;	206
iii. heinously sinful	207
Ephraim, the camp of, and its suggestions (See CAMP)	30

Eshcol	235
Every man by his own standard (See STANDARD)	24
Exclusion from religious ordinances, unwilling.....	143
i. The need of personal fitness for an acceptable observance of religious ordinances	143
ii. The unwilling exclusion of men from religious ordinances	144
iii. Enquiry concerning the reason of such exclusion	144
iv. Exemplary conduct of religious teachers in answering enquiries	144
v. Divine arrangement for the compensation of those who are unwillingly excluded from religious ordinances	145
Exclusion of the unclean, the	75
i. a sanitary measure ;	75
ii. a spiritual parable of sin	76
1. As a defiling thing	77
2. As a deadly thing	77
3. As a separating thing	77
Execution of judgment, the	311
i. God vindicates the character of His servants	311
ii. Divine threatenings are certain of fulfilment	311
iii. Everything in the universe may be employed by God as the instrument of His judgments	311
iv. The wicked often involve the innocent in the consequences of their sins	311
v. Hardened rebels are prone to cry out when the judgment of God falls upon them	311
vi. The judgments of God occasion alarm amongst men	311
Exemplary invitation, an (See INVITATION)	166
Exploration of the Promised Land by the spies, the, an illustration of human inquiries into Divine realms.....	233
i. The exploration was thorough ;	233
ii. led to the discovery of difficulties ;	233
iii. led to the discovery of rich treasures	234
Expulsion of the Canaanites, the	596
i. The imperative command	596
ii. The solemn warning	597
FAITHFULNESS of God, the	507
i. to His threatenings ;	507
ii. to His purposes ;	507
iii. to His promises	507
Favour, a noble acknowledgment of an extraordinary.....	545
i. An extraordinary favour received	545
ii. " " " " , acknowledged	545
iii. The acknowledgment accepted	546
Feast of Passover, the, a memorial and a type (See PASSOVER)	139
Feast of Tabernacles, the ; its meaning and lessons	528
i. A memorial of their emancipation from Egypt	529
ii. A memorial of their life in the wilderness.....	529

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. A thanksgiving for rest and settled abode in the Promised Land	529	ii. Man is now, as much as ever he has been, the object of God's compassion	256
iv. A thanksgiving for the completed harvest	530	iii. God's purpose with regard to man is now what it ever has been	257
Fidelity of one, the safety of many, the.....	339	God's word to man, man's access to God, and	124
First sacrament of the year, the (See SACRAMENT)	520	God, the faithfulness of (See FAITHFULNESS)	507
Forgiveness, fraud and (See FRAUD)	81	God, the supreme claims of (See CLAIMS)	342
Forward in the face of difficulties, going	575	God, the veracity of	462
In the Christian life—		God will bless His own ordinances	108
i. advancement is demanded,	575	Good, the resting and the rising of the (See RESTING)	162
ii. with a full recognition of the obstacles in the way of it;	575	Good in the path of duty, the sufferings of the (See SUFFERINGS)	193
iii. obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, may be surmounted;	576	Graves of lust, the	212
iv. and contribute to our advancement;	576	i. The tendency of lust to bring men to untimely graves	212
v. we are incited onward by many encouragements.....	576	ii. Our feelings as we contemplate these graves	212
Fraud and forgiveness	81	Guardianship of human life, the Divine	608
i. The sin of fraud:	81	i. in the institution of the cities of refuge as a provision that the life of the innocent should not be taken away;	608
1. assuming many forms;	81	ii. in the laws by which the trial of the man-slayer was to be conducted;	609
2. a wrong done to God	81	iii. in the punishment of the intentional man-slayer	609
ii. The conditions of its forgiveness	81	iv. in the punishment of the unintentional man-slayer	609
1. Consciousness of guilt	81		
2. Confession	82	HAND of the Lord, the glorious right	200
3. Restitution.....	82	Hand, the question concerning the Lord's (See QUESTION)	203
4. Sacrifice	82	Healing of the waters of Marah, the (See MARAH)	581
Fringes, the ordinance of the: gracious reminders of Divine commands	287	Heaven, the ancient Canaan a type of	239
i. The proneness of man to forget the commandments of the Lord.....	287	Heifer an analogue of the Christ, the red	354
ii. The arrangements which God has made to remind man of His commandments	287	i. In its characteristics	354
iii. The grounds upon which God requires recollection of and obedience to His commands	288	ii. In the treatment to which it was subjected	354
		iii. In the purpose for which it was designed	354
GLIMPSES of the better land	232	Heifer applied, the law of the red	352
Glory of the Lord, the earth filled with the	259	i. Liability for social evil	353
i. The import of the promise	259	ii. The ignominy of death	353
ii. The reasons we have for believing it will be realized	259	iii. Freedom from the consequences of sin is by application of a prepared remedy	353
iii. Our present duty in relation to it.....	260	iv. To be without fitness for standing before God acceptably is inexcusable and irretrievable	354
Glory of the people of God, the: Balaam's third parable	469	Heifer, the ordinance of the red; a parable of the pollution of sin, and the Divine method of cleansing therefrom	349
i. The preparation of the prophet to declare the Divine will.....	469	i. The defiling nature of sin	349
ii. His declaration of Israel's glory	470	ii. The necessity of cleansing from sin	350
1. Their beautiful appearance	470	iii. The provision for cleansing from sin	350
2. Their prosperous condition	470	iv. The application of this provision	351
3. Their exalted position	470	Heifer, the red	356
4. Their conquering power	471	i. Even the true Israelite is the subject of daily defilement	356
God dwelling with His people (See DWELLING)	80	ii. A purification has been provided	357
God of the spirits of all flesh, the	513	iii. The red heifer sets forth the daily purification for daily sin	357
God's blessing irreversible	462		
God's knowledge of His people (See KNOWLEDGE)	14		
God's pardoning grace in the past an encouragement to seek for the same in the present	256		
i. God is as able and willing to forgive now as ever He has been	256		

	PAGE		PAGE
Heiresses, the law of the marriage of (See MARRIAGE)	617	Itinerary of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land; the.....	565
High priest standing between the dead and the living, the	321	i. An incentive to gratitude to God	565
i. Aaron as the lover of the people	321	ii. An encouragement to obey and trust Him	566
ii. " " great propitiator	322	iii. A monitor against sin	566
iii. " " interposer	322	JEALOUSIES , hints on the law of	90
iv. " " saviour	322	Jehovah, the unchangeableness of (See UNCHANGEABLENESS)	460
v. " " divider	322	Joshua and Caleb: a noble effort to arrest a nation's rebellion	247
Hints on the law of jealousies	90	Joshua and Caleb—	
Holy singularity divinely honoured	262	i. were deeply grieved by reason of the rebellion;	247
i. The relation Caleb bore	262	ii. nobly endeavoured to arrest the rebellion;	247
ii. The disposition he possessed	262	iii. were in danger by reason of their effort to arrest the rebellion;	248
iii. The course he pursued	262	iv. rescued from danger by the interposition of God	248
iv. The recompense he obtained	262	Joshua and Caleb's encouraging declaration	249
Home, pilgrims nearing (See PILGRIMS).....	419	i. A supposition	249
Honour, aspects of	30	ii. An inference	250
i. Honour wisely conferred;	31	Journey of Life, Marah, or aspects of the	579
ii. in relation with duty and responsibility;	32	i. The privations of the journey	579
iii. as connected with parental influence;	32	ii. The disappointments of the journey	579
iv. as related to future greatness	32	iii. The sins of the journey	580
Honour to Moses, greater honour to Christ	221	iv. The all-sufficient Resource of the journey	580
IMPORTANCE of little things, the (See LITTLE)	71	Judgment, a memorial of (See MEMORIAL)	313
Inquest of the Lord into the sin of Miriam and Aaron, the	219	Judgment of Korah, the	312
i. The solemn convocation	219	Judgment, the execution of (See EXECUTION)	311
ii. The splendid vindication	219	Judgment, the preparation for (See PREPARATION)	305
iii. The unanswerable interrogation	220	KADESH . . . unto Abel-shittim, from	596
iv. The Divine anger	220	Kibroth-Hattaavah: striking illustrations of solemn truths	208
Inquiry and courage, Caleb—a call to (See CALEB)	240	i. The sovereignty of God	208
Institutions, the support of religious (See SUPPORT)	118	ii. The eagerness with which men toil in the pursuit of temporal and material good	208
Intercession of Moses for the doomed nation, the	253	iii. The gratification of the desires of men resulting in their ruin	208
i. The petition which he presented	253	iv. A sin, which in its first commission was mercifully passed over, if repeated may call forth the judgment of God.....	209
ii. The pleas by which he urged his petition	253	v. The sins and punishments of one generation should be remembered as a warning to future generations	209
1. The honour of the Divine name.....	253	Kibroth-Hattaavah: the graves of lust	209
2. The Divine character as revealed to him	253	i. There are perpetual resurrections of easily-besetting sins	210
3. The truth of the Divine word	254	ii. There comes a point in the history of the indulgence of besetting sins, when God ceases to strive with us and for us against them, and lets them have their way.....	210
4. The forgiveness already bestowed	254	iii. The end of that way is a grave	211
Intercession of Moses, the answer of the Lord to the (See ANSWER)	257	Knowledge of His people, God's	14
Interest in man's companionships, God's..	427	i. The great truth implied	14
An indication of—		ii. The practical bearings of this truth	14
i. the Divine solicitude for the well-being of man;	427		
ii. the importance of our companionships;	427		
iii. our responsibility to God for them;	428		
iv. the danger of dallying with temptation	428		
Interesting hidden in the commonplace, the (See COMMONPLACE)	497		
Invitation, an exemplary	166		
i. The journey	166		
ii. The invitation	167		
iii. The inducements	167		
Irreversible, God's blessing	462		
Israel and Amalek (See AMALEK)	588		

	PAGE		PAGE
Korah and his company, the base rebellion of (See REBELLION)	291	4. accountability ; and	496
Korah, the judgment of	312	5. is an object of deep interest to God	496
LAND , glimpses of the better	232	Life, the burdens of (See BURDENS)	68
Land , the arrangements for the distribution of the Promised (See DISTRIBUTION)	604	Life, the Christian : Elim	582
Land by the spies, the exploration of the Promised (See EXPLORATION)	233	i. In the journey of human life the Lord affords us many kind accommodations	582
Land, the Promised	600	ii. Refreshing mercies after seasons of distress are peculiarly sweet	582
i. Its boundaries were determined by God	600	iii. The blessings with which we are favoured should be enjoyed	582
ii. Its extent was small	600	iv. Amidst all our enjoyments we should not lose sight of our pilgrimage state	582
iii. Its position was secure	601	Life, the Divine guardianship of human (See GUARDIANSHIP)	608
iv. Its soil was fertile	601	Little things, the importance	71
v. The Israelites failed to take possession of the whole of it assigned them by God	601	i. The perfection of great things is impossible apart from due attention to little things	71
Law of the red heifer applied, the (See HEIFER)	352	ii. The most important issues sometimes depend upon slight circumstances	71
Law, the moral	588	iii. Life is composed almost entirely of little things	72
i. based its precepts upon the existence and authority of God ;	589	iv. Character is formed almost entirely of littles	72
ii. was a strict and stern, but far from an unjust or cruel system ;	589	Lust, the graves of (See KIBROTH-HATAVAH)	209
iii. was suited to the age and people to whom it was promulgated ;	589	„ „ (See GRAVES)	212
iv. certain circumstances which tended to guard, to sanction, to enforce, recommend, and to illustrate it,	589	MAINTENANCE of the Christian ministry, the Divine provision for the priests and Levites, an illustration of the	339
Leadership, the burdens of	190	i. The maintenance of the Christian ministry devolves upon the Christian Church	340
i. The position of leader of men is a trying one	191	ii. Ministers of every grade have a right to support from the Church	340
ii. The true leader of men must often be conscious of his insufficiency	191	iii. The ministry should be supported liberally	340
iii. The ablest leaders of men sometimes fail under the burdens of their position	191	iv. All the members of the Church should contribute to the maintenance of the ministry	340
Lessons from an ancient war song	413	v. All should contribute proportionally	341
i. The triumphs of warriors	413	Maintenance of the ministry, the	84
ii. The vanity of idols	413	We rest this obligation on—	
iii. The discomfiture of conquerors	413	i. The ground of honesty	85
iv. The insecurity of earthly possessions	414	ii. The ground of interest	85
Levites and their service, an illustration of the Christian ministry (See MINISTRY)	21	Man and the supernatural : Balak's first application to Balam (See BAALAM)	423
Levites, the appointment of cities for the residence of the	607	Man, in relation to order, home, and God (See ORDER)	28
Levites, the consecration of the, or aspects of acceptable consecration to God (See CONSECRATION)	131	Man, the spirit and the Sovereign of	302
Levites, the numbering of the : command and obedience (See NUMBERING)	53	i. The grand distinction of human nature	302
Life, death the crown of	482	ii. The supreme Sovereign of human nature	303
Life of the good in this world, an illustration of the : in the desert (See DESERT)	7	iii. The inspiring hope of human nature	303
Life, the apparent insignificance and real importance of human	495	Man, the supreme portion of (See PORTION)	344
i. Its apparent insignificance	495	Manifestation of the Divine Presence, the	148
ii. Its real importance	495	i. Its sphere	148
Every man has his own—		ii. Its aspects	148
1. individuality of being and circumstances ;	495	iii. Its permanence	149
2. possibilities ;	495	Manna, an illustration of the Divine provision for the spiritual needs of man	187
3. influence ;	495		

	PAGE		PAGE
i. Both are of Divine origin	188	Memorial of judgment, a.....	313
ii. " " unmerited gifts	188	i. Things appropriated to religious uses	
iii. " " wholesome	188	should be reverently regarded	313
iv. " " pleasant	188	ii. The designs and doings of wicked	
v. " " abundant	189	men are overruled by God for the	
vi. " " free	189	accomplishment of His purposes	313
vii. " " require personal appropriation	189	iii. He who sins against God injures	
Marah : aspects of the journey of life (See		himself	313
JOURNEY)	579	iv. The judgments of God should be	
Marah, the healing of the waters of	581	remembered and heeded	313
i. An illustration of four bitter things	581	Memories, partial	187
ii. " " " the Gospel	582	Mercy of God in relation to the conse-	
March, on the	174	quences of sin, the (See CONSE-	
i. The immense number on the march	174	QUENCES)	33
ii. The bitter opposers of the march	174	Mercy-seat, the cherubim and the (See	
iii. The victorious Leader of the march	174	CHERUBIM)	125
iv. The abiding presence of God on the		Midian, the vengeance of Jehovah on	
march	175	(See VENGEANCE)	536
March, the	177	Ministry, Aaron's rod an illustration of	
Marriage	619	the true Christian	327
1. is a Divine institution ;	619	i. The characteristics of this ministry	327
2. the obligations involved in it are		ii. The origin of this ministry	328
binding and sacred	619	iii. The influence of this ministry	328
i. Persons should not be coerced in		Ministry, aspects of the Christian	63
marriage	619	i. An arduous service	63
ii. There are important considerations		ii. A holy warfare	63
which should regulate the choice in		iii. A sacred charge	64
marriage	619	iv. Demands the exercise of the high-	
1. As to property	620	est faculties	64
2. As to consanguinity	620	Ministry, the Levites and their service,	
3. As to health	620	an illustration of the Christian min-	
4. As to suitability	620	istry	21
5. As to character	620	i. The true Christian minister should	
Marriage of Heiresses, the law for the	617	manifest some fitness for the work	
i. The case stated	617	before he is designated thereto	21
ii. The case adjudicated	617	ii. He is called of God to his work	21
iii. The adjudication acted upon	618	iii. His work demands his entire de-	
Marshalling of the people, the	25	votion thereto.....	22
i. Order	25	iv. A faithful discharge of his duties is	
ii. Variety	26	essential to the well-being of society..	22
iii. Unity	26	v. Personal holiness is essential to a	
iv. Security	27	faithful discharge of his duties	22
Master and His human servants, the		Ministry, the maintenance of the (See	
Divine.....	135	MAINTENANCE)	84
i. The necessity of fitness for the		Miriam and Aaron, the punishment of	
Divine service	135	(See PUNISHMENT)	222
ii. The variety of employment in the		Miriam and Aaron, the sin of (See SIN)..	215
Divine service	136	Miriam smitten with leprosy : transfigura-	
iii. The care of the Great Master for		tion through transgression	226
His servants	136	Miriam, the death of (See DEATH)	363
Measure of the Divine demands upon		Miriam, the prayer of Moses for (See	
man, the	52	PRAYER)	227
Meeting of Balaam and Balak	441	Model ordination service, a (See ORDINA-	
i. The king receives the prophet with		TION)	513
great honour	441	Modern application of an ancient incident,	
ii. The king expresses his surprise at		the (See APPLICATION)	217
the delay of the prophet in coming		Moral directions, man's need of, and God's	
to him	441	communications to man	622
iii. The prophet endeavours to mode-		Morning and evening sacrifices, the	517
rate the expectations of the king	442	Suggest our daily need of—	
iv. The king endeavours by sacrificial		i. consecration to God ;	517
offerings to induce Jehovah to favour		ii. atonement with God ;	517
his design	442	iii. prayer to God	517
v. The king and prophet ascend a		Moses's diary of travels, and its teachings	
height and obtain a view of the camp		(See DIARY)	567
of Israel	442	Moses for the doomed nation, the inter-	
		cession of (See INTERCESSION)	253

	PAGE		PAGE
Moses, the sin of	369	Nothing but names (See NAMES)	594
Murmuring, base	265	Number and service, proportion between (See PROPORTION)	73
i. Murmuring without any cause ;	265	Numbered people, the	10
ii. against the Best Being ;	266	Numbering of the Levites, the	53
iii. of long continuance ;	266	i. The interest of God in childhood	53
iv. known to God :	266	ii. The generosity of God's dealings with man	54
v. punished by God	266	iii. The obedience of God's servant	54
NAMES, nothing but	594	Numbering of the Levites, the	503
i. The tendency of sin to deprive life of any worthy significance	594	Numbering of the people, the	3
ii. The tendency of sin to retard progress	594	i. The authority for this numbering	3
iii. The importance of remembering the losses which sin causes us	595	ii. The place of " "	4
iv. The mutability of earthly things.....	595	iii. The time of " "	4
v. The unsettled character of human life upon earth	595	iv. The manner of " "	5
Nazarite, the	102	v. The design of " "	5
i. No juice of grape or produce of the vine may touch his lips	102	Numbering the people, the Divine com- mand and directions for	495
ii. No razor approaches his hair	102	i. The place in which the census was taken	495
iii. He must avoid all contact with death	102	ii. The time at " "	495
Nazarite, the involuntary defilement of the, or sin in the consecrated	95	iii. The design with " "	495
The involuntary sins of good men—		OBEDIENCE, contentment and (See CON- TENTMENT)	42
i. defile and dishonour them ;	95	Obligation of religious vows, the solemn (See VOWS)	531
ii. require atonement from them ;	96	Offering and its modern lessons, an ancient	111
iii. involve loss to them ;	96	i. They who hold the most honourable positions should be most liberal in contributions to worthy objects	111
iv. will be followed by new efforts by them	96	ii. They who are not entirely engaged in religious ministries should seek to help those who are so engaged	111
Nazarite, the offering of the, or the sacri- fice of the consecrated	98	iii. God is graciously pleased to accept of man's offerings	112
i. The lives of the best of men in the present state are imperfect	98	iv. Gifts for religious purposes should be used in accordance with the will of God	112
ii. Our services are acceptable to God only as we give ourselves to Him	98	v. In the Divine arrangements help is granted unto men according to their respective needs	113
iii. All that is good both in ourselves and in our services is attributable to God	99	Offering of the first of the dough, the	274
iv. The good man will seek for oppor- tunities of expressing his devotion to God	99	i. An expression of gratitude	275
v. The good man through the sacrifices by which he approaches God has communion with Him	99	ii. An acknowledgment of dependence	275
Nazarite, the vow of the, or acceptable consecration to God	90	iii. A consecration of common things	275
Such consecration is characterised by—		iv. A provision for the maintenance of the ministry and of the worship of God	275
i. voluntariness :	92	Offering of the Nazarite, the, or the sacri- fice of the consecrated (See NAZA- RITE)	98
ii. completeness ;	92	Offerings for dedicating the altar, the, and their moral suggestions	114
iii. subordination of sensual enjoyments ;	92	i. The significance of these offerings.....	115
iv. separation from moral evil	93	1. They express the sense of equality of obligation :	115
Needless alarm (See ALARM)	421	2. The Divine calling of the nation to be holy :	115
Neglect of religious ordinances, the wilful	146	3. the great truths taught by the different sacrifices	115
i. is common ;	146	ii. The significance of the record of these offerings	116
ii. is sinful :	147	1. The pleasure of God in the gifts of His people	116
iii. will be punished	147	2. The permanence of good works	116
Neglect, ruinous	358	Offerings of the feast of Passover, the	521
i. Man is polluted by sin	358		
ii. God has provided a cleansing element for man's sin	358		
iii. To be efficacious this cleansing element must be applied by man	358		
iv. Man may neglect to avail himself of this cleansing element	359		
v. By such neglect man excludes him- self from the highest privileges	359		

	PAGE		PAGE
Offerings of the Sabbath and of the new moons, the; or seasons of special religious observance (See SABBATH)	518	iv. the flesh which was eaten	143
Omission and ignorance, sins of (See SINS)	277	Passover, the feast of, a memorial and a type	139
Order, home, and God, man in relation to	28	i. A memorial of a great deliverance	139
i. The importance of order	28	ii. A type of a greater deliverance	140
ii. The sacredness of family life	28	Pentecost, the feast of; or man's celebration of the goodness of God in harvest (See CELEBRATION)	522
iii. The right way to feel and act towards God	28	Perfection, aims at	274
Ordinance of the fringes, the: gracious reminders of Divine commands (See FRINGES)	287	Peril and a gracious precaution, a grave	336
Ordinance of the passover (See PASSOVER)	142	Persistence in the pursuit of a sinful purpose	456
Ordinance of the red heifer, the; a parable of the pollution of sin and the Divine method of cleansing therefrom (See HEIFER)	349	i. Persistence in the pursuit of an evil purpose	456
Ordinances, God will bless His own	108	ii. Error as to man's power to curse his fellowman	456
Ordinances, the wilful neglect of religious (See WILFUL)	146	iii. Error as to the nature of the Divine Being	456
Ordinances, unwilling exclusions from religious (See EXCLUSION)	143	iv. The communication of the message of God to an ungodly man	456
Ordination service, a model	513	v. The attention with which Divine communications should be received	456
i. The person ordained should be chosen of God for his work	513	Phinehas, the circumstances which moved the zeal of	492
ii. The ordination is to the most important work;	513	Phinehas, the flagrant wickedness of Zimri and the fervent zeal of	489
iii. should be conducted by tried men;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, long separation (See SEPARATION)	574
iv. should be accompanied with the imposition of hands;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, going forward in the face of difficulties (See FORWARD)	575
v. should include a charge to the ordained;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, standing still in the midst of danger (See STANDING)	571
vi. should be conducted in the presence of the people;	514	Pilgrimage, aspects of human	164
vii. should confer honour upon the ordained	514	i. Human pilgrimage should be prosecuted according to Divine directions	164
viii. A person so chosen should seek special direction from God, and seeking, shall obtain it	514	ii. In human pilgrimage the arrangements and provisions for Divine worship should be matters of primary concern;	165
Overthrow of the Amorites, the; or the defeat of the people that delight in war	411	iii. the most reverent care should be exercised in relation to sacred things;	165
i. A reasonable request preferred	411	iv. the weak and the wandering should be tenderly cared for	165
ii. A hostile refusal returned	411	Pilgrimage, a song of the	407
iii. An unprovoked assault ending in unmitigated defeat	412	i. The needs of human pilgrimage	407
iv. A great victory obtained by those who had in vain asked for a small favour	412	ii. The Divine provision for these needs	408
v. A territory which had been obtained by conquest lost by defeat	412	iii. The continuance of human pilgrimage	408
PARENTS and children: Aaron and his sons (See AARON)	45	Pilgrimage of life, uneventful stages in the (See UNEVENTFUL)	404
Parting of Balaam and Balak, the	484	Pilgrimage of the good, the	152
They parted—		i. the infallible Guide in	152
i. having utterly failed in their designs;	484	ii. the perfect Protector in	153
ii. with characters considerably modified by their association with each other;	484	iii. the true spirit in	153
iii. but not for ever	485	Pilgrims nearing home	419
Passover, ordinance of the	142	i. are cheered by delightful prospects;	419
illustrates the method of salvation through Christ with regard to—		ii. need preparation for the state into which they are about to enter;	419
i. the victim which was chosen;	142	iii. are still subjected to trials and difficulties	419
ii. the oblation which was made;	142	Pillar of cloud and fire, the	150
iii. the blood which was sprinkled;	143	i. The advantages of its possession	150
		ii. The perpetuity of its enjoyment	151
		Pillar, the cloudy	152
		Plague, Aaron staying the (See AARON)	323

	PAGE
Plague and a Divine antidote, a deadly.....	394
i. The sin of the people	394
ii. The punishment of their sin	395
iii. The penitence of the people	395
iv. The Divine antidote for the plague	395
Plague and a surprising remedy, an awful	319
i. An awful spectacle exhibited	320
ii. The surprising remedy found	320
iii. A practical application demanded	321
Plague stayed, the.....	323
i. The evil	323
ii. The punishment	324
iii. The remedy	324
Portion of man, the supreme	344
i. is all-sufficient;	345
ii. is joy-inspiring;	345
iii. is inalienable	346
Prayer of Moses for Miriam, the.....	227
i. The prayer	227
ii. The answer	227
Precaution, a grave peril and a gracious	336
Preparation for judgment, the	305
i. The separation of the people from the rebels	305
ii. The final statement concerning the decision of the question which the rebels had raised	305
iii. The final opportunity afforded to the rebels of turning from their evil course	306
iv. The persistent audacity of the rebels	306
Presence of God, rebellion maintained in the very (See REBELLION)	300
Presence, the manifestation of the Divine (See MANIFESTATION)	148
Presumption	283
i. What it includes	283
ii. Its chief causes	283
iii. Its terrible results	283
Presumptuous enterprise and its disastrous termination, a	267
Presumptuous sins, the nature and punishment of	279
Priesthood, the sin of usurping the office of the	296
Priestly blessing, the (See BLESSING) ..	106
Privations of man and the resources of God, the	366
i. There are privations in human life.....	366
ii. These sometimes develop the evil tendencies of human nature	366
iii. These privations and the evils which are occasioned by them, impel the good to seek help of God	367
iv. These privations are sometimes removed in answer to the prayer of the good	367
Privileges of man, the condescension of God and the (See CONDESCENSION) ..	120
Promised land, the (See LAND)	600
Proportion between number and service ..	73
i. The wisdom of God	73
ii. The reasonableness of His requirements	74
iii. The obedience of His servants	74
Proposal a generous	169
i. The characteristics of a true church ..	169

	PAGE
ii. The duty of the church to invite suitable persons to join with it	170
iii. The argument we can use is that association with the Church will do those who enter into it good	171
iv. Let all who belong to the Church take care to make this argument true	171
Proposal of the Reubenites and Gadites, the amended	552
i. made;	552
ii. accepted;	553
iii. confirmed	553
Propriety in worship (See WORSHIP)	271
Provision for the priests and Levites, the Divine, an illustration of the maintenance of the Christian ministry (See MAINTENANCE)	339
Provision for the spiritual needs of man, the manna, an illustration of the Divine (See MANNA)	187
Punishment of Miriam and Aaron, the	222
i. The Divine judgment because of their sin	222
ii. This judgment leading to their humiliation	223
iii. Aaron's acknowledgment of the eminence of Moses	223
iv. The magnanimity of Moses	224
v. The power of his intercession	224
vi. The justice and mercy of God in His treatment of Miriam	224
vii. The sin of one person checking the progress of an entire nation	224
Punishment of presumptuous sins, the nature and	279
Punishment of the tempters, the	493
i. Sin, whether in the people of God or in His enemies, cannot go unpunished	493
ii. Whatever tends to lead into sin should be viewed by the godly as an enemy to be contended against	493
iii. Under certain circumstances war is justifiable	493
Punishment, the sins of holy men and their (See SINS)	372
Purity, where God dwells there must be ..	78
i. God Himself is pure, and cannot associate with the impure	79
ii. God cannot do any good to the impure	79
Pursuit of a sinful purpose, persistence in the (See PERSISTENCE)	456
QUESTION concerning the Lord's hand, the	203
Apply this question to—	
i. the subject of creative manifestations	203
ii. Divine providences for His Church; ..	203
iii. the salvation of the most guilty sinners;	203
iv. the fulfilment of Divine prophecies and promises	203
RANK and service	11
i. Co-operation in Divine service	11
ii. Society's need of leaders	12

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. The grand characteristic of true leaders	12	Removal of a devoted servant of God, the	384
Rebellion, a noble effort to arrest a nation's: Joshua and Caleb (See JOSHUA)	247	Rephidim; or, water from the rock in Horeb (See WATER)	583
Rebellion maintained in the very presence of God, the	300	Rephidim; or, the Battle between Amalek and Israel (See BATTLE)	585
i. The test proposed to the rebels	300	Report of the spies, the rebellion of Israel upon receiving the (See REBELLION)	244
ii. The test accepted by the rebels	300	Reports of the spies, the, and their lessons for us	236
iii. The interposition of the Lord God	300	i. Examine the reports of the spies	236
iv. The intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation	301	1. The report of the majority	236
Rebellion of Israel, the Divine declaration of judgment because of the (See DECLARATION)	250	2. The report of the minority	237
Rebellion of Israel upon receiving the report of the spies, the	244	ii. Deduce the lessons arising from these reports	238
i. Grievous mental distress	244	Request and an ungenerous refusal, a reasonable	376
ii. Unreasonable and unjust murmuring	244	i. A reasonable request	376
iii. Shocking blasphemy	245	1. Reasonable in itself	376
iv. Foolish and wicked rebellion	245	2. Urged by forcible reasons	376
v. The noble conduct of Moses and Aaron in these circumstances	245	ii. An ungenerous refusal	376
Rebellion of Korah and his company	291	This probably arose from—	
i. The rebellion	291	1. fear of injury from Israel;	376
1. Its leaders	291	2. envy at the growing power of Israel;	377
2. Its nature	291	3. remembrance of ancient injury	377
3. Its cause	291	Request of the daughters of Zelophehad, the: the rights of women	509
ii. The noble conduct of Moses in the rebellion	292	i. The request of the daughters of Zelophehad	509
1. His resource in trouble	292	1. was presented in an orderly manner;	509
2. His confidence in God	292	2. was reasonable;	509
3. His rebuke of the rebels	292	3. indicated respect for their father;	509
Rebellion of the people, the aggravated, the effectual intercession of the good, and the justice and mercy of God	316	4. implied faith in the promise of God,	509
i. The aggravated rebellion of the people	316	5. and an earnest desire for a portion in the Promised Land	509
ii. The speedy interposition of Jehovah	316	ii. The Divine answer to their request	509
iii. The effectual intercession of Moses and Aaron	316	Request of the Reubenites and Gadites, the selfish	548
iv. The exercise of the justice and mercy of God	317	This request exhibits—	
Rebels, the cry of the subdued (See CRY)	331	i. mean selfishness;	548
Rebuke of Moses to the Reubenites and Gadites, the faithful	551	ii. predominant worldliness;	549
i. The injustice of their proposal	551	iii. disregard of the interests and rights of their brethren;	549
ii. Its tendency to dishearten their brethren	551	iv. disparagement of their Divine calling	549
iii. Its wickedness	551	v. want of faith in the Divine promise	549
iv. Its tendency to call down the wrath of God	551	Resources of God, the privations of man and the (See PRIVATIONS)	366
v. The solemn example by which Moses enforced his rebuke	552	Responsibility of each and the co-operation of all in the service of God, the (See CO-OPERATION)	58
Refuge	607	Resting and the rising of the good, the	162
Refuge, the cities of, an illustration of the salvation of Jesus Christ (See CITIES)	611	i. The people of God are sometimes called to remain, as it were, stationary for a time in this life;	162
Refuge, the cities of, as legislative enactments and as religious institutions	614	ii. yet there is no permanent settlement in this world;	162
Refuge, the security of those who have fled to the city of (See CITY)	616	iii. both their restings and risings are ordered by God;	163
Relation of the Gospel ministry to the seasons and services of the Christian life, the silver trumpets, or the (See TRUMPETS)	158	iv. whether resting or marching they are protected by Him	163
		Return of the victorious army, the	541
		i. The reception of the returning warriors	541
		ii. The remonstrance with them	541
		iii. The retribution to the Midianitish women	542

	PAGE		PAGE
iv. The purification of the warriors, captives, and spoils	542	i. Divine directions for insuring order	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the amended proposal of the (See PROPOSAL)	552	ii. Divine distribution of duty	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the arrangements for carrying out the proposal of the (See ARRANGEMENT)	560	iii. Divine recognition of the sacredness of things associated with religious worship	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the faithful rebuke of Moses to the (See REBUKE)	551	Sacrifice of Balak and Balaam, the	446
Reubenites and Gadites, the selfish request of the (See REQUEST)	548	i. objectively was as perfect as they could make it ;	446
Reverses, the benefit of	392	ii. subjectively was very imperfect and even sinful	446
i. Reverses are sometimes encountered in the path of duty ;	392	Sacrifices, the morning and evening (See MORNING)	517
ii. arouse the true-hearted to more vigorous effort ;	392	Sea, the dividing of the Red (See DIVIDING)	577
iii. and thus contribute to their triumph	393	Secrets and human curiosity, Divine	66
Revolutions, national : Balaam's final parables	480	i. Certain things in the universe are hidden from man	66
National revolutions—		ii. Men are prone to curiously pry into hidden things	66
i. exhibit the instability of earthly greatness and temporal power ;	480	iii. Irreverent prying into hidden things may lead to terrible results	67
ii. manifest the principles of Divine retribution ;	480	Security, Balaam's declaration of Israel's	465
iii. are ordered by God	481	i. The important truth affirmed	465
Rock at Kadesh, the, an emblem of Christ	370	ii. The triumphant exclamation uttered	465
i. in its characteristics ;	370	Self-retributive nature of sin, the	567
ii. in the water which flowed from it	370	Confirmed by—	
Ruin and the remedy, the	333	i. the germinal character of human actions	557
i. The devastations of death	333	ii. the exercise of memory ;	557
ii. The cause of these widespread desolations	333	iii. the operations of conscience ;	557
iii. The remedy for them	334	iv. the power of habit	557
Ruinous neglect (See NEGLECT)	358	Sending forth of the spies, the	230
Rules for the distribution of the Promised Land (See DISTRIBUTION)	502	i. The origin of this expedition'	230
		ii. The agents in this expedition	230
		iii. The aims of this expedition	231
		iv. The spirit appropriate to this expedition	231
SABBATH and of the new moons, the offerings of the, or seasons of special religious observance	518	Senses over the soul, the supremacy of the (See SUPREMACY)	183
i. The tendency of material and temporal things to engross our attention and regard	519	Sentence of God upon the sinful people, the	263
ii. The supreme importance of spiritual things	519	i. was conspicuously just ;	263
iii. Man's need of spiritual engagements and exercises	519	ii. was utterly irreversible ;	264
Sabbath-breaker and his doom, the	286	iii. caused great sorrow	264
i. The sin	286	Separation, a long : Pi-hahiroth	574
ii. The arrest	286	i. The triumphant faith of Moses	574
iii. The consultation	286	ii. The suicidal hardihood of the wicked	574
iv. The sentence	286	iii. The working of God in history	574
v. The execution	286	iv. Separations which take place amongst men in the present	574
Sabbath-breaker, the sin and punishment of the	283	v. The great separation which will take place amongst men in the future	575
i. The sin committed	283	Separation from the wicked, the duty of	307
ii. The punishment inflicted	284	By friendly association with them—	
Sacrament of the year, the first	520	i. we countenance them in their sins ;	307
i. Approach to God through sacrifice the privilege of His people	520	ii. we are in peril of being drawn into their sins ;	308
ii. In some seasons the mind is aroused to a special contemplation of the great atonement	521	iii. we are in peril of the judgment which will fall upon them for their sins	308
iii. In all our religious engagements we must have respect to the presence and glory of God	521	Serpent a type of Jesus Christ, the brazen	401
Sacred things and duties	55	i. The malady	401
		ii. The remedy	401
		iii. The appropriation	401
		iv. The result	402
		Serpent, the brazen ; or, the terrors of existence faced in faith	403

	PAGE		PAGE
Servant of God summoned home, the	511	iii. The lessons	487
(See SUMMONED)	511	Sin of man and the salvation of God, the	318
Servant, the good and faithful	383	i. There is an awful controversy between a holy God and a rebellious world	318
i. The common destiny of man	383	ii. There is at hand a prescribed and Divinely approved remedy	319
ii. The rigoronsness of moral law	383	Sin of Miriam and Aaron, the	215
iii. The termination of life in the midst of labour	383	i. Their sin	215
iv. God's agency in man's dissolution	383	ii. The Divine cognizance of their sin	215
v. The promptitude with which Providence supplies the places of the dead	383	iii. The commendable conduct of Moses under the provocation of their sin	216
vi. The trial of human friendships	384	Sin of Miriam and Aaron, the inquest of the Lord into the (See INQUEST)	219
vii. The painful recognition by society of its greatest losses	384	Sin of Moses, the	369
Servants, helpful thoughts for the Lord's	203	i. Its nature	369
i. The obedience of Moses, an example for them	203	ii. Its lessons	370
ii. The bestowment of the Spirit upon the elders, encouragement for them	203	Sin, the self-retributive nature of (See SELF-RETRIBUTIVE)	557
iii. The error of Joshua, admonition to them	204	Sin will come to light	559
iv. The magnanimity of Moses, an example for them	204	It finds men out—	
Servants, the Divine Master and His human (See MASTER)	135	i. in the woe which comes on some sinners here ;	559
Service	138	ii. in the judgments which God sometimes sends :	559
i. The service God demands of all Levites	138	iii. in the fears, clamours, and remorse of conscience ;	560
ii. God demands the service in our prime ;	138	iv. and in the next world, if the sinner die unpardoned	560
iii. and when it can be most easily rendered	138	Sin will find us out, the certainty that (See CERTAINTY)	556
Service, aspects of Divine	40	Sins dangerous and sins deadly	281
i. Persons of every kind and degree of faculty may find employment in the Divine service	40	i. There are degrees in sin	281
ii. Even the lowest position in this service should be faithfully filled	40	ii. While all sins are dangerous, some are deadly	282
iii. Even the lowest position in this service is one of privilege and honour	40	Sins of holy men and their punishment, the	372
iv. Seemingly obscure positions in this service are, in many instances, of great importance	41	i. The liability of the good to sin	372
Service, God's claims upon man's (See CLAIMS)	50	ii. The danger of their failing in those excellences which most distinguish them	373
Service, Rank and (See RANK)	11	iii. The impartiality of the Divine government	373
Shittim, the sin of Israel at, and the judgment of God (See SIN)	487	iv. The great guilt of those who occasion sin in the good	373
Sinai, in the desert of : Lessons from the worship of the calf	591	v. The means which God uses to deter men from sin	373
Sinai, in the desert of : Moses's communion with God in the mount (See COMMUNION)	592	Sins of omission and ignorance	277
Sinai, in the desert of : the golden calf	590	i. Omissions of duty are accounted sinful by God ;	277
Sinai, in the desert of : the moral law (See LAW)	588	ii. even when arising from ignorance	277
Sin and punishment of the Sabbath-breaker, the (See SABBATH-BREAKER)	283	iii. A whole nation may be guilty of such sins	277
Sin in the child of God	375	iv. Such sins may be forgiven	278
i. is very painful to God ;	375	Sins, the nature and punishment of presumptuous	279
ii. most inexcusable ;	375	Song at the well head, a	410
iii. most disastrous in its results ;	375	i. A promise of supply	410
iv. very certain of punishment	375	ii. The song	410
Sin of Israel at Shittim and the judgment of God, the	487	iii. The song was a prayer	410
i. The sin	487	iv. Then they went to work	411
ii. The judgment	487	Song of the Pilgrimage, a (See PILGRIMAGE)	407
		Sorrows of bereavement, the (See BE-REAVEMENT)	385
		Spies, the	241

	PAGE		PAGE
i. The ungodly world are not to be excused for that instead of investigating religion for themselves, they usually trust to the representation of others	241	Supremacy of the senses over the soul, the characterized by—	183
ii. Bring forth the bad spies	242	i. unsatisfied cravings;.....	184
iii. Now we have some good spies	242	ii. humiliating effeminacy;	184
iv. The necessity of bringing out a uniformly good testimony concerning religion	242	iii. daring unbelief;	185
Spies, the reports of the, and the lessons these reports teach us (See REPORTS).....	236	iv. deplorable degradation;	185
Spies, the sending forth of the (See SENDING)	230	v. decided contempt of Divine blessings	185
Spirit and the Sovereign of man, the (See MAN)	302	TABERAH and its teachings	181
Spoils of the War, the distribution of the (See DISTRIBUTION)	543	i. Man sinning against the goodness of God	181
Stability of the Church, the, and the security of believers	463	ii. God recognising the sin of man	181
Standard, every man by his own.....	24	iii. Suffering men seeking the intercession of the good	182
i. The one Israel	24	iv. The intercession of the good resulting in blessing to men	182
ii. The various tribes	24	v. The employment of a transient judgment as a permanent warning	182
iii. The special directions to the different tribes	24	Tabernacle in the midst of the host, the.....	36
iv. The spiritual lessons the subject presents to us.....	24	i. The reasons for placing the Tabernacle thus	36
Standing still in the midst of danger	571	ii. The uses of so doing	36
i. The deplorable effect of slavery	571	Tabernacles, the feast of; its meaning and lessons (See FEAST)	528
ii. The distinguished heroism of Moses	572	Tempters, the punishment of the (See PUNISHMENT)	493
iii. The remarkable exhortation of Moses—	572	Terrors of existence faced in faith, the brazen serpent, or the	403
Applicable to—		Testimony of the irreligious to the value of religion, the	453
1. Our personal salvation	572	i. The exclamation of Balaam.....	453
2. The exigencies of life	572	ii. The instruction to the people of God	454
Star and the Sceptre of Israel, the	476	Testimony of the ungodly to the preciousness and power of piety, the undesigned	398
i. The glory of the Messiah as a King.. ..	476	i. By showing that the want of it is weakness	398
ii. The extent of His conquests	476	ii. By seeking help from him whom they knew to be a man of God	399
iii. The prosperity of His subjects	477	iii. By confessing that Moses had nothing to fear from God, while they had everything to fear	399
Star spoken of by Balaam, Christ the (See CHRIST)	479	iv. By acknowledging that Moses could get from God what they could not.....	399
Succoth and Etham: the determination of the route (See DETERMINATION).....	569	Thoughts for the Lord's servants, helpful (See SERVANTS)	203
Suffering the consequence of sin, conflict the condition of attainment, and (See CONFLICT)	554	Transfiguration through transgression; Miriam smitten with leprosy	226
Sufferings of the good in the path of duty, the	193	Trial of the suspected wife, the	86
i. As a fact	194	i. Confidence in conjugal relations is of great importance	87
ii. As a problem	194	ii. Adultery is a sin of the greatest enormity	88
iii. Hints toward the solution of the problem	194	iii. The punishment of sin is closely related to the sin itself.....	88
Summoned home, the servant of God	511	iv. God will bring to light the secret sins of men	88
i. Sin is an evil of the greatest gravity	511	v. God will vindicate the innocent who have suffered from suspicion or slander	89
ii. God is the absolute Sovereign of human life	511	Trumpets, the feast of: how to begin a new year (See YEAR)	523
iii. Inspiring visions are often granted to the good as they approach the close of their earthly career.....	511	Trumpets, the silver	161
iv. Through the gates of death the good enter upon scenes of social life	511	i. They call the people to God's sanctuary	161
Support of religious institutions, the	118	ii. They give command to march	161
i. Some of the responsibilities of the wealthy	118	iii. They sound for war	162
ii. An illustration of the voluntary principle	119		

	PAGE		PAGE
iv. In the grand feast they cheer the worshippers	162	iii. A people delivered from a present evil world	452
Trumpets, the silver, or the relation of the Gospel ministry to the seasons and services of the Christian life... ..	158	iv. A people sustained by Jehovah	452
They were used—		v. A pilgrim band	453
i. for the calling of assemblies;	158	vi. A people bought with a price	453
ii. for summoning the people to advance:	159	vii. A people loved with an infinite love	453
iii. for encouraging them in battle;	159	viii. A people preparing to pass over to the goodly land	453
iv. for suitably observing seasons of special interest	159	Vow of the Nazarite, the (See NAZARITE)	90
UNBELIEF of good men, the, and its Divine antidote	199	Vows of women, the—their ratification and abrogation	533
i. The proneness of good men to unbelief	199	i. Religious vows are sometimes rashly made	533
ii. The Divine antidote for unbelief in the good	199	ii. Religious vows made by females under the authority of a father, or a husband, and disallowed by him, cease to be binding	533
Unchangeableness of Jehovah, the	460	iii. Vows made by females under such authority and not disallowed, and vows made by females not under such authority, are binding	533
i. Some men think that God will lie	460	iv. If a husband improperly annul a vow made by his wife, the guilt of its non-fulfilment will rest upon him	533
ii. Others fear He may lie	461	Vows, the solemn obligation of religious	531
iii. But He neither will nor can lie	461	i. The case supposed	531
Unclean, the exclusion of the (See EXCLUSION)	75	ii. The danger implied	531
Uneventful stages in the pilgrimage of life	404	iii. The command given	532
i. Many scenes in the pilgrimage of life are quiet and uneventful	404	WAR SONG, lessons from an ancient (See LESSONS)	413
ii. In such scenes we should follow the Divine directions	405	Water from the rock in Horeb	583
iii. Many of the records of the pilgrimage of life are transient	405	i. The place of the miracle	584
iv. Present progress is promoted by the recollection of God's past doings	405	ii. The temptation connected with the miracle	584
Usurping the office of the priesthood, the sin of	296	iii. The nature of the miracle	584
VALUE of religion, the testimony of the irreligious to the (See TESTIMONY)	453	Wicked ambition faithfully rebuked (See AMBITION)	293
Vengeance of Jehovah on Midian, the	536	Wicked, the duty of separation from the (See SEPARATION)	307
i. The punishment of sin is certain	536	Wickedness, audacity in (See AUDACITY)	297
ii. God can work by many or by few in the execution of His purposes	537	Wife, the trial of the suspected (See TRIAL)	86
iii. God honours the holy zeal of His servants by employing them as leaders in the execution of His purposes	537	Women, the vows of—their ratification and abrogation (See Vows)	533
iv. God enriches His people with the spoils of their enemies	537	Worship, propriety in	271
Veracity of God, the	462	i. The gracious intimation	271
Victorious army, the return of the (See RETURN)	541	ii. The directions concerning the worship of God	272
Vindicating the high-priesthood of Aaron, the Divine plan for, and its moral teaching	325	iii. The pleasure of God in the worship of His people	272
i. True ministers are elected by God	325	YFAR, how to begin a new	523
ii. It is of great importance that men should know that their ministers are called by God	325	i. With special attention to religious duties and privileges	524
iii. The vitality of sin is of dreadful tenacity	326	ii. With humble confession of sin and prayer for pardon	524
iv. God is engaged in eradicating sin from human hearts	326	iii. With grateful acknowledgment of Divine mercies	524
Vision from the rocks, the	452	iv. With complete consecration of ourselves to God	524
i. The ruggedness of the land of our present sojourn	452	Year, the preacher's blessing; or, the happy new	106
ii. The glorious land	452	ZEAL,	491

	PAGE		PAGE
i. The source of godly zeal ...	491	Zeal of Phinehas, the circumstances which moved the ...	492
ii. The seat of godly zeal ...	492	Zelophehad, the request of the daughters of (See ZELOPHEHAD) ...	509
iii. The object of godly zeal ...	492	Zimri, the flagrant wickedness of, and the fervent zeal of Phinehas ...	493
iv. True zeal is blended with knowledge ...	492		
v. Zeal is self-forgetful ...	492		

INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS.

AARON, the death of, 381	Blessing of God in the heart, the, 105
Affection, filial, 535	Blood of Christ, conviction of sin necessary to appreciation of the, 359
Alarming appearances, boldly confronting, 423	Blood of Christ, our need of the, 356
Alarms of the good, the groundless, 422	" " the cleansing efficacy of the, 355
" " wicked, 423	Brotherhood of all men, the, 338
Alienation between friends, the bitterness of, 377	Burden, what the term includes, 70
Altar, the good man's tent and, 166	Burdens, profitable, 71
Ambition defined, 216, 293	" should be blessings, 70
" the benefits of rightly directed, 295	
" the curse of ungoverned, 295, 602	CANAANITES, the reason for the expulsion of the, 598
" what it is, 293	Care of men, God's constant, 301
Angel of Jehovah, the, 438, 439	Catholicity of Christianity, the, 205
" the destroying, 141	Character, the continuance of the construction of, 406
Anger and hatred distinguished, 399	Children of godly parents, wicked, 47
" righteous and sinful, distinguished, 399	Christ essential to man's spiritual life, 371
" the suppression of, 374	" every eye shall see, 478
Appropriate the benefits of Christ's death, how to, 142	" present with His Church, 149
Ass, the speech of Balaam's, 438	" the everlasting fulness of, 356
Associations, the peril of evil, 306, 308, 351, 428, 488	" the holiness of, 355
Assumptions of Romanism, blasphemous, 457	" the Saviour of all men, 613
Atonement, what it consists in, 279	" the self-existence of, 371
	" the Star and Scripture of Israel, 477
BACKSLIDER, a spiritual loser, the, 97	" the vicarious sufferings and death of, 355
Balaam, prophetic powers possessed by, 426	" to be supremely trusted, the ever-living, 386
" specially favoured by God, 427	Christ's sacrifice, the perfection of, 141
" the anger of God against, 438	" " how to appropriate the benefit of, 142
" the counsel of, 488	Christian needs the help of God, the, 269
" the egotism of, 471	" will confess Christ, the true, 134
" the petulance of, 439	Christians have to fight real battles, 234
" the veracity and truthfulness of, 475	" lights in the world, 130
" tries to change God's will, 433, 447	" should be separate from sin, 94
Balaam's ass, the speech of, 438	Churen, Christ present with His, 149
Beauty of a true Christian, the, 329	" Christ's garden, the, 471
" of religion, the, 329	" marked by order, the, 471
Beulah, in the land of, 120	" of God, the comprehensiveness of the, 451
Bible a clear light, the, 130	
" how to study the, 234	
Blessedness, true, 451	

Church secured by God, the, 443
 „ strengthened through her enemies, 472
 „ the perpetuity of the, 472
 Claim upon all we possess, God has a just, 343
 Cleanliness recommended, 78
 Cleanse from sin, man's inability to, 352
 Cleansing needed even by good men, constant spiritual, 338
 Common things consecrated by religion, 276
 Companions, their influence on our character, 428
 Complaint, man's proneness to, 183
 „ contrasted with thanksgiving, 266
 Compulsion of sinful habits and circumstances, the, 299
 Confession of sin, a condition of forgiveness, 83
 Condescension of God, the, 122
 Conquerors, the fall of great, 415
 Conscience, the fallibility of, 623
 „ the misery of a guilty, 439
 „ the terrors of a guilty, 558
 Consecration claimed by our Lord, the extent of the, 101
 Consecration to God, entire, 93, 134, 344
 „ „ „ voluntary, 93
 Contentment, 43, 44
 „ a medicine for all miseries, 70
 „ in our position, 166, 503
 Contribute to the cause of God, every one should, 341
 Contributions to the cause of God should be in proportion to our means, 342
 Co-operation, Divine and human, 605
 Courage, true and false, 232
 Covenant, the new, 459
 Covetousness, a deceitful and dangerous sin, 426
 „ the sin of, 602
 Cowardice, moral, 238
 Creator, the faithful, 301
 Crowd, the unreasonableness of a, 246
 Curiosity should be controlled, 68

DEATH, a going home, 382
 „ glimpses of glory in, 512
 „ hope in, 365
 „ in itself the same to the righteous as to the wicked, 420
 „ neglect of conversation on, 97
 „ of faithful ministers a loss to society, 382
 „ of the good is ordered by God, 381
 „ sudden, 97
 „ the gate of life, 365
 „ the great leveller, 365
 „ the importance of preparedness for, 365, 366, 382, 561, 562
 „ the lot of all men, 365, 382, 613
 „ the penalty of sin, 613
 „ without God, terrible, 312

Degradation of manhood, 368
 Degrees of guilt and punishment, 265
 Degrees of guilt in the same crime, 280
 Democracy a self-cancelling business, 292
 Departure of God from man, 221
 Dependence upon God, man's, 154, 276, 530
 Desires an injury, the granting of our selfish, 198

Destroying angel, the, 141
 Die the death of the righteous, how to, 452
 „ this year thou shalt, 526
 Difficulties, believing effort will overcome the greatest, 394
 „ in Christian life and work, 234
 „ removed by God, great, 577
 „ should not dishearten the Christian, 394
 Difficulty, the discipline of, 393
 Discouraging sin, the duty of, 308
 Disobedience hardens the heart, wilful, 299
 Duty are best, first thoughts of, 434

EARTHLY things, transient, 481
 Effort and its reward, Christian, 6
 Efforts to obtain salvation, earnest, 306
 Enemies of the godly, invisible, 176
 Enjoyment in quiet scenes and duties, 406
 Envy, the commonness of, 207
 „ the folly of, 208
 „ the proneness of man to, 205
 Evil-speaking, 216
 Examination, self-, 527

FAITH appropriates Gospel blessings, 190
 „ is possible to all, the exercise of, 396
 „ the achievements of, 239
 „ the eye of the soul, 396
 „ the inspiration and strength of, 239
 „ the wisdom of walking by, 239
 Faithful unto death, 249, 339
 Faithfulness in little things, 41
 „ of God, 460, 508
 „ valued by God, 259
 Fame, how it is gained, 498
 „ how to achieve enduring, 501
 „ uncertainty of earthly, 562
 Family, sacredness of the, 39
 Fasting, the efficacy of, 527, 528
 Feeblest power should be used, the, 41
 Felicity is transient, earthly, 583
 Festivals, the times of the Jewish, 525
 Fidelity in fulfilling promises, 554
 „ of each benefits all, the, 338
 Forgetfulness of mercies, trials leading to, 368
 Forgiving spirit, the nobility of a, 317, 396
 Fraud of every kind forbidden by God, 83
 Freeness of the gifts of God, 190, 369, 371
 Future a blessing, ignorance of the, 67

GENTLENESS of God, 39
 Gift to man, God's supreme, 343
 Giving religiously, 545
 „ the benefit of, 546
 Glory of God, the, in what it consists, 255
 „ unconscious, 593
 God all-mighty to fulfil His promises, 200
 „ approves the good, hates the evil, 327
 „ cannot change, 448
 „ dishonoured by man's unbelief, 252
 „ gives Himself to His people, 459
 „ is a jealous God, 438
 „ the guide of His people, 154, 164
 God's control of nations, 481
 „ interest in infant life, 55
 „ omniscience, 15
 „ withdrawal from man, 221

- Good men to sin, liability of, 374**
Goodness of God contemned by man's unbelief, the, 252
Gospel blessings, freeness of, 190, 369, 371
 " " refreshment of, 371
 " " sufficiency of, 371
 " water an emblem of the, 371
Grapes, remarkable clusters of, 235
Gratitude for small mercies, great, 546
 " to God, 276
Greatness cannot be manufactured, true, 13
 " moral excellence essential to true, 500, 501
 " independent of class or station, true, 501
 " the obligations of, 113
Gregarious, men are, 231
Guidance implored, Divine, 154

HABITS, the miserable bondage of evil, 559
Hands, the laying-on of, 515
Hatred of sin, God's, 552
Hearing the Gospel without serious attention, 327
 " the Word with attention, 457
 " " " self-application, 123
Heaven, holiness necessary to enter, 359, 360
 " rehearsing for, 420
Help, mutual dependence and, 554
 " of God essential to the Christian, 269
History is unwritten, the best part of human, 498
Holiness in little things, 289
 " of God the chief reason for the holiness of man, the, 288
Home without enquiry as to religious privileges, choosing a, 166
Honour, duty the way to, 33
 " true, 442
Honours, undeserved, 33
Humility before God, 276
 " in religious teachers, becoming, 145

IDLENESS leading to sin, 488
Idolatry, the heinousness of, 597
Ignorance of the revealed will of God, a sin, 279
Immortality a consolation to the bereaved, the revelation of a blessed, 387
 " brought to light in the Gospel, 387
 " of good deeds, the, 118
Imperfect, the best of men in this world are, 100, 374
Imperfections should not dishearten the Christian, 394
Indignation against evil, 491
Individuality of man, the, 496
Influence, every one exerts a never-ending, 485
 " unremitting personal, 485
Ingratitude, base, 368
 " the bitterness of, 247
Insignificant people, 496
Instruments, God can work by weak, 538
 " God usually employs suitable, 539
Instruments of the Divine judgments, the, 252, 312
Intercession, the power of, 183, 225
Intercessor, Moses an, 587

Invitation to come to Christ, 190
Irreversibleness of human conduct, the, 439

JEALOUSY defined, 89
 " personified, 89
Journey of life, the, 155
Justice of God, the, 220, 306
 " " in the punishment of sin, the, 318
 " the temple of, 544

KEPT by God, Christians are, 105
Kindness, brotherly, 377

LABOURERS wanted in the cause of God, 113
Leaders of men, the trials of, the, 192, 193
Liberty in the service of God, 75
Life a condition of successful Christian work, intense spiritual, 329
Life a reason for earnestness in Christian work, the brevity of, 525
 " of souls, goodness the only true, 329
 " the sacredness of human, 609, 610
Little things, faithfulness in, 73
 " " make human characters, 73
 " " seeds of great ones, 73
 " " the importance of, 73
Lives, how to ennoble commonplace, 499
Living for the invisible, 482
Looking to Christ, healing and life through, 396
 " " " life by, 402
Love of God purifying, the, 352
 " " the fountain of blessing, the, 189
 " " unmerited, the, 190
Loving-kindness of God, the preventing, 583
Lusts of the Israelites, the carnal, 186

MAGICIANS to curse enemies, employment of, 425
Man a great boon to the world, a great, 386
Man does not die until his work on earth is done, the good, 386
 " God manifest in, 497
 " God's interest in, 497
 " something good in the worst, 497
Manna a miraculous product, the, 189
Marah, the bitter disappointment at, 581
Marriage, a model, 535
 " and celibacy contrasted, 618
 " different conditions of, 618
 " of Christians, a principle to be observed in the, 621
Marriages, early, 621
 " prohibited, 621
 " thoughtless, 621
 " unprincipled, 620
 " unsuitable, 621
Materialism degrades manhood, 368
Meekness defined, 217
Memory an inspiration in conflict, 416, 417
Memory a source of misery, 558
 " imperishable, 558
Memory, life enriched and inspired by, 407
 " nothing lost to, 558
Mercies, grateful acknowledgment of God's, 525
 " the multitude of God's, 525

- Mercy cried for too late, 312
 " God's delight in, 225
 " of God infinite, the, 258, 369
 " of God, salvation through the, 35
 " of God, various manifestations of the, 318
 Messiah, the conquests of the, 478
 Minister is called of God, the true Christian, 23, 326
 " learning is requisite for the Christian, 130
 " prayer indispensable to the, 146, 515
 Ministers a loss to society, the death of faithful, 382
 " cannot do everything, 515
 " experienced, 65
 " like trumpets, 160
 " reverent, 65
 " should be adequately supported, 86, 341
 " should be holy, 23
 " should be honoured, 62
 " should feed their flocks, 86
 Ministers, the greatness of the work of, 62, 515
 Ministry a Divine institution, the Christian, 326
 " " " vocation, the Christian, 23,
 " 50, 326
 " great gifts not indispensable to usefulness in the, 341
 " is life-giving, the true, 329
 " is perennial, 23
 Minorities, honour to small and genuine, 248
 Money, a ruinous passion for saving, 442
 " cannot buy, the things which, 443
 Monotony a source of enjoyment, 406
 Murder, the criminality of, 609, 610
 Murmurers, habitual, 267
 Murmuring embitters life's mercies, 247
 Mystery, omnipresence of, 67

 NATIONAL revolutions controlled by God, 481
 Needs of man, the abundant provision of God for the, 409
 " " " the continuousness of the, 409
 " " " the immense number of the, 409
 Neglect of religious worship, 147
 Number of the redeemed, the countless, 175, 451

 OBEDIENCE, blessedness of, 44, 55
 " complete, 55
 " filial, 534
 Obligation and liberty, 75
 " and power, 74
 Offering our best to God, 101, 117
 " praise to God, 118
 Offerings accepted by God, humble, 137, 546, 547
 Omissions of duty, sinful, 278
 Omniscience of God, 15
 Onwardness of life, 168
 "Order is Heaven's first law," 27

 PALESTINE, the natural fertility of, 603
 " the secure boundaries of, 603
 " the small extent of, 603
 Parental authority, 33
 " encouragement of pious children, 47
 " example, 47

 Parental influence, 33
 " prayers, 47
 " responsibility, 534
 " teaching, 47
 " training, 46
 Parents, honour due to, 33
 Passage of the Red Sea, the, 578
 Passive virtues, the heroism of the, 573
 Past favours an encouragement to seek Him, God's, 255
 Penitence and pardon cannot abolish all the consequences of sin, 258
 " begotten of pain is short-lived, 186, 269
 " leads to joy, 527
 Perfection of Christ's character, the, 351, 355
 Persistence in sin, the great guilt of, 457
 Pilgrimage, continuousness of human, 409
 Pillar of cloud and fire adapted to the needs of Israel, 149
 " " " a protection, 164
 Places, sacred, 57
 Please ourselves without displeasing God, striving to, 434
 Pleasures of sense, the perils of the, 489
 Portion, God the only abiding and unchanging, 347
 " of the Christian, the all-sufficiency of the, 346
 " of the Christian, the joyfulness of, 347
 Power proportioned to human needs, Divine, 114
 " should be used, the feeblest, 41
 Prayer and effort combined, 587
 " and praise, daily, 518
 " efficacy of, 183, 225, 317
 " elements of, 123
 " indispensable to ministers, 146, 515
 " what is, 123
 Prayers, the punishment of unsubmitive, 198
 Preacher, a lifeless, 328
 " solemnity of the work of the, 321
 Preaching, not easy work, 137
 Preciousness of small services, 42
 Preparation for religious work, necessary, 136
 " of heart for public worship, 145
 Presence of Christ the secret of His people's success, the, 150
 " of God in human life, 123
 " of God, the blessedness of realizing the, 176
 Preserved by the Lord, Christians, 105
 Presumption, a growing sin, 301
 " the peril of, 269
 Presumptuous sins, an example of, 280
 " " harden the heart, 281
 Priestcraft, a great evil, 457
 Privileges estimated in hell, religious, 295
 Progress a great law of the universe, 577
 " is from one difficulty to another, Christian, 577
 " should be continuous, Christian, 160
 Promises are reliable, God's, 508
 " should be pleaded in prayer, God's, 255
 Prospects of the godly, the glorious, 169
 Providential care, God's, 301
 Punishment corresponding to sin, 225
 Punishment, God has many methods of, 312

Punishment growing out of the sin, 89, 265, 481
 „ of sin, certain, 89, 258, 265, 312, 318, 374

„ of sin, impartial, 225, 374
 Purposes of God, eternal and unchangeable, the, 508

REASON and faith, 200

„ the insufficiency of human, 624

Rebellion against God, the futility of, 332, 333
 „ at Rephidim, the, 584

Receiving and giving, universal, 117

Reconciliation of brethren at the Cross, 378

Redemption, an illustration of, 51

Reflection, a time for, 525

Refuge for the manslayer, a, 613

Religious efforts should begin at home, 169

Reputation, posthumous, 232

Resistance reveals the strength of opposition, 416

Responsibilities, great honours involve great, 338

Rest in heaven, 420

„ true, 530

„ uses of, 163

Restitution a condition of forgiveness, 84

Restraints, the need of Divine, 443

Revelation, unacknowledged obligations to Divine, 623

„ man's need of Divine, 624

Reverence, filial, 534

Reverence for sacred places and things, 314

Revival of psalmody a token of revival of religion, 409

Revolutions, noiseless, 499

Rod of Moses an incentive to valour, the, 587

SABBATH, importance of preserving the religious spirit of the, 285

„ man's need of the, 285

„ obligation, the true basis of, 285

„ observance, the effect of, 520

Sacred places, 57

Sacrifice in the path of duty, self-, 544

„ salvation through, 133, 279

„ the perfection of Christ's, 141

„ the true value of, 448

„ without mercy, worthless, 448

Saddling of asses, 434

Safety in battle to be ascribed to God, 546

Salvation attainable only by faith, 402

Satisfaction cannot be found in worldly things, 9

Saviour of all men, Christ the, 613

Security of the Christian, 154, 451, 485

Self-accusation follows sin, 613

Selfishness of men, 475

„ the failure and folly of, 550

„ the injustice of, 550

„ the prevalence of, 550

„ warning against, 550

Separate from the world, Christians should be, 94, 451

Service, the dignity of, 13

Services recognized by God, the smallest, 137

„ value of slight, 42

Serving God with our worst, 605

Sin brought to light, secret, 99, 553

Sin cannot enter heaven, 78, 359, 360

„ discouraged by Christianity, 288

„ forgiven yet punished, 258

„ immortality of, 35

„ in a child of God is punished, 97, 512

„ infectious, 187, 351, 428

„ injures the sinner, 314

„ is against God, all, 83

„ leads to death, 281, 314, 475

„ must be slain, 599

„ of one an injury to many, the, 552

„ the folly of, 175

„ universal, 613

Sins of ignorance, 279

„ „ omission, 278

„ „ presumption, 281

Slander best answered by silence, 218, 219

„ the best men are exposed to, 218

Socialism of grace, the, 168

Soldier, exhortation to the Christian, 417

„ is assured of victory, the Christian, 416

„ the Christian a, 416

Soul of man, everlasting individuality of the, 304

„ 304 „ unspeakable importance of the,

Sovereignty of God, the basis of the, 38

„ „ „ the manifestation of the, 502

„ „ „ the righteousness of the, 503

Spirit, a prayerful, 518

„ of man, evidence of the existence of the, 304

Standing still, progress in, 573

Star, Christ the bright and morning, 477

Stillness beneath the hand of God, 573

Stimulants contrasted with the Holy Spirit, 94

Strangers and pilgrims, 163

Suffering, character tested by, 195

„ knowledge through, 71

„ progress through, 195

„ promotes future joy, present, 195

„ vicarious, 196

Suicide, the criminality of, 610

Sundays, the happiest, 286

TEARS should be controlled, 246

„ „ „ sacred, 246

Temperance, the obligation, 187

Temptation, likely instruments used in, 494

„ not to be parleyed with, 428, 429

„ should be avoided, occasions of, 543

„ the all-triumphant answer to, 493

„ veiled with the mask of virtue, 494

Tempting to sin, the extreme guilt of, 265, 493

Tent and altar, the good man's, 166

Thirst, the intense misery of, 581

Trials, how they should be borne, 369

UNBELIEF dishonours God, 252

„ of good men, 200

Unchangeableness of God, 460

Unsatisfactoriness of worldly pleasures and possessions, 9, 299

Use of the gifts of God, obligatory, 51, 52

- VARIETY**, the beauty of, 27
Various ways of serving God, 137
 " manifestations of God to the soul, 150
Veracity with truthlessness, 475
Victories of faith, the, 20
Victory of the Christian, through Christ, 176
 " " " right is certain, 161
Vitality of sin, the terrible, 327
Vocation, the Christian ministry a Divine, 23,
 50, 62
Voice of God in nature, the, 10
Voluntaryism, efficiency of, 119
Vows, forgotten, 532
 " should be fulfilled, baptismal, 532
 " should be fully performed, 532
 " the voluntariness of religious, 532
WAITING for the home-call, 420
 " judicious, 6
Walking by faith, not by sight, 239
War, sometimes justifiable, 19, 538
 " the cruelty, 542
 " the injustice of, 19, 414
 " the ravages of, 414
Warnings precede Divine judgments, solemn,
 307
Watchfulness, the importance of, 375
Water an emblem of the Gospel, 371
Way, the evil of having our own, 231
Wealth and spiritual poverty, material, 209
 " does not satisfy men, 209
 " should be properly used, 117
Wells a valuable property in the East, 377
Wicked should be excluded from the Church
 the, 78
Wisdom of God seen in the variety of His
 gifts, the, 74
Women, the disabilities of, 510
 " the power of, 510
Word aright, hearing the, 123
Work, diversity of Christian, 49, 57, 137
 " sacredness of, 49, 57
 " under Jesus Christ, Christian's, 338
Workers in the Church to look to their own
 salvation, 218
World is too much with us, the, 520
Worldly things, transitory, 595
Worship a necessity of the human soul, 148
 " can be offered in any place, acceptable,
 146
 " culture and beauty in, 273
 " ennobles the worshipper, 274
 " imperfection and sin in public, 338
 " morning and evening, 518
 " ordinary and extraordinary seasons of,
 520
 " praise the supreme act of, 274
 " propriety in, 273
Wrath of God, the, 220, 221
ZEAL, defined, 491
Zeal for the glory of God, constant, 254
 " in the service of Christ, 491
 " like fire, 491
 " works wonders, 491

INDEX TO AUTHORS QUOTED.

- ADAMS, Thomas, 129, 130
 Addison, Joseph, 78, 295
 Ainsworth, 437
 Alford, Dean, 180, 188, 349, 362, 515, 536,
 563, 569, 577
 Allon, Dr. Henry, 20, 148, 273, 274
 Anon., 338, 422, 460, 462, 554
 Arnold, Dr. Thomas, 285
 Arvine, R., 198, 318
 Attersoll, W., 37, 65, 70, 78, 86, 88, 89, 206,
 216, 265, 279, 312, 341, 368, 378, 427, 451,
 452, 481, 488, 489, 518, 602
 Augustine, 299
 BABINGTON, Bishop, 65, 68, 116, 184, 217, 373,
 436, 475, 489, 618
 Baillie, Joanna, 18
 Barnes, Dr. Albert, 333
 Barrett, W. G., 430, 432, 444
 Barrow, Dr. Isaac, 613
 Bates, Dr., 583
 Baxter, Richard, 321, 533, 598, 599
 Bayne, Paul, 396
 Beaumont, Sir J., 113
 Beecher, H. W., 15, 19, 28, 33, 39, 57, 70, 72,
 73, 123, 130, 150, 176, 190, 195, 196, 200,
 209, 255, 258, 265, 269, 299, 307, 308,
 327, 329, 338, 352, 365, 382, 394, 409,
 416, 422, 448, 451, 475, 482, 491, 497, 534,
 543, 547, 559, 558, 605, 621
 Bevan, W. L., 621
 "Biblical Museum," 57, 90, 152, 187, 240,
 274, 339, 385, 543, 554
 Bonar, Dr. H., 213, 246, 453, 541, 567
 Boston, T., 370
 Brooks, Thomas, 218, 247, 347
 Brown, J. B., 174, 187, 211
 Browning, Mrs. E. B., 73, 129, 183, 184
 Brougham, Lord, 304
 Bubier, G. B., 100, 346
 Buddicom, 570
 Burder, G., 263
 Burke, E., 293
 Burkitt, W., 64
 Burns, Dr. Jabez, 24, 203, 233, 250, 283, 324,
 455, 463, 466
 Burritt, Elihu, 485
 Burton, R., 293
 Busfield, W., 528
 Bushnell, Dr. H., 14, 42, 47, 55, 75, 94, 114,
 134, 142, 221, 495
 Byron, Lord, 557
 CARLYLE, Thomas, 23, 50, 232, 238, 249, 273,
 293, 413, 552
 Carpenter, Dr. H. S., 483
 Caryl, Joseph, 338
 Chalmers, Dr. Thomas, 118, 122, 302
 Channing, Dr. W. E., 414, 415
 Chaplain, A. Military, 435
 Charnocke, Stephen, 16, 39, 74, 252, 253, 307,
 397, 459, 460, 503, 606
 Cheever, Dr. G. B., 169, 420, 421, 423, 558
 "Christian Treasury," 97, 535
 "Christian World," 147, 384
 "Christian World Pulpit," 483
 Cicero, M. T., 439
 Clarendon, Lord, 207
 Clarke, Dr. Adam, 89, 229, 331, 335, 336, 349,
 362, 437, 444, 467, 597
 Clarke, Samuel, 91, 525
 Clayton, George, 179
 "Clerical Year Book," 399
 Close, Dean, 334
 Coleridge, Bishop, 306
 Coleridge, S. T., 415
 Collier, Jeremy, 206
 Cook, Eliza, 10
 Cowper, William, 65, 355, 3 6, 412
 Cox, Samuel, 142
 Crabbe, G., 182
 Culross, Dr. J., 177
 Cumming, Dr. J., 30, 105, 125, 150, 222, 247, 255
 DALE, Dr. R. W., 62, 93, 101, 135
 Davenant, Sir W., 298
 Dibdin, R. W., 297
 Dickens, Charles, 118
 "Dictionary of the Bible," Dr. Smith's, 76,
 84, 91, 157, 181, 229, 362, 363, 377, 388,
 389, 390, 391, 392, 407, 469, 524, 525, 547,
 548, 562, 563, 601, 621
 "Dictionary of Illustrations," 51, 73, 219, 255,
 265, 267, 269, 377, 457, 534
 Doddridge, Dr. P., 22, 513, 515, 525
 Donne, Dr. J., 365
 Dryden, J., 557
 Dwight, Dr. T., 460, 550
 Dykes, Dr. J. O., 131, 217, 359, 360, 452
 "ECLECTIC Review," 148
 Emerson, R. W., 329
 "Evangelical Synopsis," 336
 FARRAR, Canon, 99, 225, 375

- Feltham, Owen, 207
 Ferguson, Dr. R., 57, 193, 195, 374, 501, 512, 544
 Flavel, J., 457, 493, 532
 Fletcher, Dr. Joseph, 280
 Fuerst, Dr. Julius, 562
 Fuller, Thomas, 23
- GARDEN, Francis, 284
 Gerhard, P., 38
 Gillfillan, G., 98, 141, 381, 383, 512, 577, 590, 594
 Gill, Dr. John, 271, 439
 "Gleanings," 97, 117, 118, 183, 219, 429, 518
 Goldsmith, O., 23
 "Good Words," 404
 Griffin, R. A., 138, 156, 228
 Grindon, L. H., 365
 Grosart, 6
 Grove, George, 388, 389, 390, 600, 601
 Gurnall, W., 428, 491, 493, 494
 Guthrie, Dr. Thomas, 50, 281, 333, 356, 525, 546, 623
- HALE, Sir M., 129, 428
 Hall, Robert, 68, 123, 145, 154, 398, 414, 457, 458
 Hamilton, Dr. James, 10, 137, 338
 Hamilton, Dr. R. W., 78
 Hare, A. W., 108
 Harmer, 158
 Harris, Dr. John, 342, 343, 344,
 Harris, W., 578
 Havard, W., 423
 Hayman, Dr. H., 157, 229, 388, 389
 Hemans, Mrs., 580
 Hengstenberg, Dr. E. W., 449, 450, 484
 Henry, Matthew, 47, 55, 74, 181, 245, 254, 294, 338, 395, 617, 618
 Herand, J. A., 558
 Herber, George, 43, 44, 57
 Herve, Bishop, 290
 Holmes, O. W., 47
 "Homiletic Quarterly," 179, 435
 Hood, E. P., 161
 Horns, Bishop, 279, 562
 Horton, T. G., 440
 Howe, John, 396
 Hunter, Dr. H., 439
 Huntington, Dr. F. D., 21, 47, 68, 101, 137, 194, 329, 369, 494, 510, 573, 574
- JAHN, Dr. John, 349, 612
 James, J. A., 207, 382, 428
 Jones, Harry, 163
 Jones, Thomas, 190
 Josephus, Flavius, 413
 Judkin, T. J., 528
- KEBLE, John, 52, 133
 Keil and Delitzsch, Drs., 25, 44, 88, 99, 103, 110, 127, 128, 179, 180, 192, 214, 243, 244, 269, 270, 271, 278, 290, 316, 324, 335, 339, 340, 345, 348, 349, 362, 387, 417, 418, 438, 444, 445, 446, 450, 467, 468, 469, 484, 486, 509, 531, 536, 545, 548, 563
 Kennicott, Dr., 55
- Kitto, Dr. John, 235, 395, 423, 425, 426, 432, 434, 488, 538, 543, 581, 585, 587, 598
 Knobel, 606
 Krummacher, G. D., 186
- LANE, J. D., 323
 Law, Dean, 11, 30, 103, 162, 236, 331, 403, 491, 608
 Leask, Dr. W., 508
 Leighton, Abp., 481
 Lester, Dr. J. W., 193
 Liddon, Canon, 371
 "Literary World," 457
 Lloyd, David, 17, 29, 53, 59, 80, 90, 119, 213, 257, 282, 315, 376, 399, 568
 Locke, John, 624
 Longfellow, H. W., 385
 Lynch, T. T., 41, 200
 Lyte, 69
 Lyttelton, Canon, 404
 Lytton, Lord, 246, 277, 403
- MACAULAY, Lord, 499
 Macdonald, Dr. G., 13
 Mackay, Dr. C., 258
 Macmillan, D., 588
 Mant, Bishop, 62, 295
 Martin, Samuel, 183, 288
 Mathew, 423
 McCormac, H., 239
 Melville, H., 7, 176, 206, 310, 451, 477, 478, 479, 507
 Miller, Hugh, 21
 Miller, M., 120
 Miller, S., 260
 Milman, Dean, 86, 569, 571, 579, 608
 Milton, John, 27, 129
 Moore, Daniel, 281
 Monsell, J. S. B., 368
 More, Hannah, 87
 Morris, A. J., 102, 539
 Mullens, Dr. Joseph, 147
 Murray, W. H. H., 35
- NEWMAN, Cardinal, 154, 304, 305, 360, 427, 434, 438, 439
 "New York Independent," 33
- "ONE hundred Sketches of Sermons," 593
 "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament," 227, 313, 330, 441, 584
 Outram, Dr. W., 517
 Owen, Dr. John, 428
- PARKER, Dr. Joseph, 41, 49, 55, 66, 67, 83, 99, 106, 114, 155, 161, 163, 164, 166, 168, 195, 200, 205, 221, 231, 232, 239, 241, 259, 274, 276, 306, 312, 327, 341, 356, 359, 366, 369, 374, 378, 407, 409, 417, 442, 443, 448, 482, 485, 494, 496, 498, 499, 501, 503, 508, 515, 530, 532, 538, 545, 550, 622
 Parsons, James, 385, 613
 Patrick, Bishop, 37, 270, 444
 Payson, Dr. E., 83, 84, 299, 308
 Perowne, Dean, 3, 389, 390, 391, 407
 Phillott, H. W., 377
 Pigg, J. G., 42

- Pilkington, J. G., 220
 Playfere Thomas, 23
 Plumer, Dr. W. S., 560
 Plumptre, Prof. E. H., 84
 Pope, Alexander, 433
 Porter, Dr. J. L., 599
 Pulsford, John, 39, 234, 301
 Panshou, Dr. W. M., 73, 146, 155, 161, 276,
 314, 326, 347, 491
 Pusey, Dr., 176

RAFFLES, Dr. Thomas, 562
 Raleigh, Dr. Alex., 190, 382, 407, 410, 583
 Reid, J. M., 339
 Reynolds, Dr. H. R., 62, 84, 286, 289
 Richard, Henry, 415
 Riddel, John, 386, 387
 Roberts, Arthur, 582
 Robertson, F. W., 70, 71, 72, 78, 94, 96, 221, 285,
 286, 434, 439, 448, 471, 475, 481, 520, 596
 Rochester, Lord, 619
 Rowe, N., 245
 Ruskin, John, 13, 19, 27, 44, 550, 554

SALTER, H. G., 252, 508
 Saurin, James, 361
 Scott, Thomas, 82, 524, 541, 597
 Secker, William, 351
 Shakespeare, W., 33, 51, 67, 87, 197, 208, 217,
 247, 295, 298, 380, 422, 558, 619
 Sibbs, Richard, 396
 Simcon, Charles, 109, 462, 480, 557
 Sleigh, William, 143, 263, 617
 Smiles, Dr. S., 393, 394
 Smith, Henry, 62
 Smith, J. H., 355
 Socrates, 207
 South, Dr. R., 301, 546
 "Speaker's Commentary," 2, 63, 69, 75, 90,
 110, 128, 156, 157, 180, 181, 214, 244,
 289, 290, 291, 325, 335, 348, 361, 363,
 388, 390, 391, 392, 418, 445, 468, 469,
 486, 529, 531, 536, 548, 564, 565, 599,
 600, 606
 Spencer, Thomas, 583
 Spenser, Edmund, 89
 "Spiritual Bee," 187
 Spitta, 136
 Sprague, Dr. W. B., 591
 Spring, Dr. G., 317, 318
 Spurgeon, C. H., 123, 134, 137, 149, 150, 163,
 164, 166, 171, 176, 178, 183, 187, 190,
 195, 202, 209, 218, 225, 226, 235, 239,
 243, 255, 259, 262, 269, 279, 289, 295,
 312, 314, 322, 327, 329, 332, 347, 352,
 358, 365, 366, 368, 369, 371, 375, 394,
 409, 411, 416, 417, 420, 423, 443, 451,
 471, 472, 475, 491, 497, 520, 525, 527,
 528, 535, 539, 546, 547, 552, 577

 Stanford, Dr. C., 530
 Stanley, Dean, 181, 361, 363, 338, 424, 563,
 601, 603, 604
 Steele, Sir R., 619
 Sterne, Laurence, 396
 Steward, George, 401
 Storr, Dr., 486
 Stowe, Dr. C. E., 189
 "Study," 71, 492
 "Sunday School Teacher," 94, 249, 301, 554
 "Sunday School Teacher's Treasury," 276,
 356

TALBOT, 97
 Talmage, Dr., 308, 371, 372, 525, 526, 559,
 562
 Taylor, Bishop, Jeremy, 36, 374, 618
 Temple, Ebenezer, 152
 Tennyson, Alfred, 32, 33, 182, 501, 576
 Thodev, Samuel, 319, 321, 400, 454, 464, 465,
 473, 516, 521, 555, 616
 Thomas, Dr. David, 75, 86, 117, 146, 384
 Thompson, H., 338
 Thomson, J. R., 472
 Tillotson, Abp., 318
 Todd, Dr., 267
 Tourneive, 111
 Trapp, John, 73, 184, 191, 220, 229, 291, 337,
 519
 Trench, Abp., 75, 96, 100, 129, 222, 223, 236,
 468, 532
 Trench, F. F., 554
 Tulloch, Dr., 387
 Tupper, Martin F., 225
 Turner, Dr. G., 613

 "UNION Magazine," 428

VAUGHAN, Dr. R., 123, 279
 Vinet, Dr. Alex., 23, 118, 402

WARDLAW, Dr. R., 527, 610, 621
 Waring, A. L., 75
 Watson, Richard, 104, 127, 508, 610, 621
 Watt, C. K., 277
 Watt, D. G., 354
 Watts, Dr. Isaac, 522
 Webster, 544
 Wesley, Charles, 18, 21, 159
 Whale, W., 592
 White, H. K., 595
 Whittier, J. G., 199
 Williams, W., 149
 Willis, N. P., 295
 Wordsworth, William, 40, 529
 Wythe, W. W., 453

YOUNG, Dr. Edward, 87, 295, 380, 562

ERRATA.

- Page 36*a*, line 50, *for* "xxvii." *read* "xxxvii."
 " 39*a*, " 2, " "form" " "from."
 " 84*a*, " 53, " "Plumtre" *read* "Plumptre."
 " 100*b*, " 17, " "God" " "Christ."
 " 115*b*, " 45, " "taonement" *read* "atonement."
 " 191*a*, " 43, " "negotius" " "negotius."
 " 224*a*, " 44, *supply* "the" *before* "good."
 " 415*a*, " 50, *for* "2 Cor. ix." *read* "2 Cor. x."
 " 448*a*, " 26, " "word" " "way."
 " 466, " 24, " "blessings" " "blessing"
 " 494*b*, " 27, " "Huntingdon" *read* "Huntington."
 " 533*a*, " 18, " "them" " "him."

A homiletical commentary on the Book of

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00067 6504

[illegible]

HIGHSMITH #45115

